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ROBERT SHORROCK

THE CHALLENGE OF EPIC

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ALLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE *DIONYSIACA* OF NONNUS

BY

ROBERT SHORROCK

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PREFACE

This monograph represents a slightly revised version of my 1999 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis: 'Method and Madness in the *Dionysaca* of Nonnus'.

The debts that I have incurred in the writing of this book stretch back to long before my first fateful encounter with Nonnus in the Classical Faculty Library, Cambridge in November 1994. My greatest debt is to my parents, Peter and Elizabeth Shorrock, for their unwavering support, their encouragement and their interest over the last twenty-seven years. It is to them with thanks and love that I dedicate this book.

I am grateful to the several institutions and numerous teachers who nurtured my early interest in the Classical world. At Clitheroe Royal Grammar School my interest in Greek mythology was encouraged by Dudley Green; whilst Keith Harwood sacrificed many lunch-hours to teach me Greek. It was as an undergraduate in the Department of Classics at the University of Durham that I was first taught to think hard about the Classical world. In this pursuit Tony Woodman, Michael Stokes and John Moles all gave freely of their time.

At Cambridge I was fortunate to be supervised by Neil Hopkinson for both my M. Phil. and Ph.D. Over the space of five years he played a wise and infinitely patient Homer to my own upstart Nonnus. I have benefited greatly, and continue to benefit, from his example and from his immense learning in the spheres of both Latin and Greek.

My two Ph.D. examiners, Philip Hardie and Byron Harries, were both generous in sharing their insights into matters Nonnian. Their detailed comments and criticisms have given me pause for thought over a number of issues. Thanks must also go to Richard Hunter for reading an early version of Chapter 2 and to Jason König who read the complete manuscript in its two separate 'incarnations', as thesis and book. The task of proof-reading was valiantly undertaken by Theo Pike.

Throughout my time as a graduate in Cambridge I was supported by a British Academy Major State Studentship; I benefited additionally from a number of grants and awards from the Faculty of Classics and Christ's College, Cambridge. Reference should also be

made to the stimulating atmosphere of Classics Graduate Common-room; it is to be thanked both for its company and for the cheerful forbearance with which it greeted a long line of research papers on Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.

Three years down the line I can now thank Vedia Izzet for all that she has done to me. My editors at Brill, Marcella Mulder and Gera van Bedaf, also deserve my appreciation for their expertise and considerable patience. Finally, I should like to thank my colleagues and pupils at Eton College for providing a humane and stimulating environment in which to bring *The Challenge of Epic* to its conclusion.

Quotations from the *Dionysiaca* are taken from the Budé edition where it is available, and otherwise from the 1959 edition of Keydell. Translations from the Greek have been variously adopted and adapted from the Loeb Classical Library.

Any infelicities that remain are, of course, my own.

RECS
Eton College
Windsor
November 2000

INTRODUCTION

> There is no poet who has been so contradictorily judged as Nonnus. Some have placed him on a par with Homer, and have found no language sufficiently warm to express their admiration. Others have treated him with the opposite extreme of disparagement.[1]

The appearance of the *Dionysiaca* in the fifth century AD had an immediate and profound effect on the Graeco-Egyptian literary world. Nonnus' stylistic influence on successive generations of poets, on Colluthus and Musaeus, on Pamprepius, Christodorus and Dioscorus, is readily discernible.[2] His proem is quoted from memory by Agathias of Myrina, the sixth-century AD poet and historian; whilst from the same century comes a papyrus fragment of several books of Nonnus' epic: a clear demonstration of his early and established popularity.[3] In the words of one critic, Nonnus was 'the most influential Greek poet since Callimachus'.[4]

It would appear in fact that Nonnus' epic has maintained a continuous, and even approving, sequence of readers from its first publication until the present day.[5] Read right through the Middle Ages,[6] the *Dionysiaca* was taken up by Poliziano in Renaissance Italy, where in the eighteenth century it came under the enthusiastic 'patronage' of Giovan Batista Marino. At a similar time in Germany, Nonnus was read and admired by Goethe. In England in the nineteenth century he was championed by the eccentric novelist Thomas Love

[1] Thomas Love Peacock quoted by Lind (1978) 164–5; the sentiment is echoed by Chamberlayne (1916) 40 in his own brief account of the reception of Nonnus.

[2] It is a tradition of earlier criticism to talk about a 'school' of Nonnus; see, for example, Bury (1889) 1.317: 'There was one remarkable poet in the fifth century, and only one, who had a sufficiently original manner to found a school of imitators'.

[3] P Berol. 10567; cf. Cameron (1993) 46: 'Together with Homer and *Nonnus*, the Garlands may well have been the most popular classical poetry books in mid-sixth-century Constantinople' [my emphasis].

[4] Cameron (1982) 227.

[5] On the later reception of Nonnus see the invaluable article by Lind (1978).

[6] Lind (1978) notes allusions to Nonnus in Genesius and the *Epitaphium Michaelis Syncelli* (tenth century); *Etymologicum Magnum* (twelfth century); Maximus Planudes (thirteenth century).

Peacock, the friend of Shelley.[7] A recent reworking of Greek mythology by Roberto Calasso owes a great debt to the *Dionysiaca*, and shows that, in certain quarters at least, the spirit of Nonnus is still alive and well.[8]

Modern critics form a marked contrast to this long and positive line of readers, reacting to the *Dionysiaca* with alternating bouts of indifference and disdain. In his 1991 monograph, *The idea of epic*, J. B. Hainsworth went so far to declare that 'the loss of... Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* would be no great cause for lamentation.'[9] His view is extreme, but hardly heretical.[10] The majority of critics who do engage with the *Dionysiaca* have interests which lie outside the field of literary criticism. The forty-eight-book epic has proved itself a valuable resource in the search for fragments of lost (and 'better') Hellenistic writers;[11] it is also much treasured for its rich seam of rare mythological ore: a repertory of curious tales, often unattested elsewhere.[12] Metrical scholars have politely applauded the technical competence of the Nonnian hexameter;[13] whilst most recently Nonnus' poem has been used to excavate and explore the socio-political topography of the late-Antique World.[14] Attention is, however, seldom given to the

[7] Lind (1978) 165 found no evidence that Shelley had himself read Nonnus, 'but it would be rash to assume that he did not do so and he may even have used Nonnos as an inspiration somewhere in his poetry'. Lind's caution may now have been rewarded: see Mazzeo (1999) 145–54 who argues for the direct influence of the *Dionysiaca* on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound.*

[8] Calasso (1993) *passim*, esp. 330–3.

[9] Hainsworth (1991) 9.

[10] It was Bentley who, to some extent, set the tone for the modern critical response to Nonnus, when he described Nonnus as 'an able Grammarian, though a very ordinary Poet' (Bentley (1699) quoted by Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1. xviii); Rose (1958) 156 dismissed the *Dionysiaca* as '[a] long and very dull poem'; West (1992) 19 quotes J. W. B. Barns: 'he's so bad, he's almost good!' Even critics sympathetic to Nonnus have shied away from declaring that the *Dionysiaca* coheres into a meaningful entity. Thus Jack Lindsay (1965) 393 is forced to confess that '[Nonnus'] whole fable, his narrative of the Indian war, is devoid of meaning. At best it is an allegory of the wars between east and west from Alexander to early Byzantine days, with their Persian threat; at worst it is a dull farrago of interminable Bacchic onslaughts which lack all drama because we know the wretched Indians cannot defeat the god'.

[11] See especially Hollis (1976, 1994b).

[12] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1. xix: 'While . . . anyone who uses Nonnos as a handbook to any sort of normal and genuinely classical mythology will be grievously misled, the searcher into sundry odd corners will be rewarded for his pains, and even those who are studying the subject more generally cannot afford to neglect this belated product of the learned fancy of Hellenized Egypt.'

[13] West (1982) 177.

[14] Chuvin (1991).

Dionysiaca as a poem in its own right; to a consideration of Nonnian poetics and narratological concerns.

Critical opinion at the beginning of the twenty-first century still remains firmly set against Nonnus the poet; but perhaps the worst hostility has now passed. Over the last few years scholars have been gradually reclaiming the literature of the Second Sophistic from precisely the sort of value-laden prejudice which is still directed towards late-Antique literature in general, and Nonnus in particular. There are signs that the critical ice-age which has for generations covered the whole of the later Roman literary world is at last beginning to thaw; and slowly that thaw is beginning to reach even the coldest of regions. This climate change is due in no small part to the ground-breaking work of Vian and the Budé editors,[15] and a recent landmark collection of essays.[16] It is, however, depressing to relate that a 1999 'guide to the Postclassical world' contains not a single reference to its most important poet.[17]

This book undertakes a fresh investigation of the phenomenon of the *Dionysiaca.* It challenges the widespread and largely uncritical assumption that Nonnus' epic is a literary failure; and argues that Nonnus' 'failure' is to be understood rather as the failure of modern critics to come to terms with late-Antique allusive poetry and to engage with the particular, unique, demands of the *Dionysiaca.* It is divided into four chapters. The first chapter considers the attempts of earlier critics to come to terms with the narrative form and composition of Nonnus' vast epic. Some critics have suggested that the poem is underpinned by coherent principles of organisation; others suggest that Nonnus' epic lacks any grand narrative framework and is loosely composed out of a series of juxtaposed episodes. It will be argued that the *Dionysiaca* is neither clearly structured nor clearly unstructured: we should consider not one but a number of *different*

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[15] Vian (1976) et al.; commentary due for completion in the early years of this new millennium.

[16] Hopkinson, ed. (1994b); an extract from Book 5 of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* was included in his recent anthology of imperial poetry (1994c). Some interesting and important thematic studies include an unpublished dissertation on Nonnian voyeurism by J. J. Winkler (1974); structuralist readings of the *Dionysiaca* by Abel-Wilmanns (1977) and Fauth (1981); Gigli-Piccardi's *Metafora e Poetica* (1985) and a series of psychoanalytical studies by Newbold (1984, 1993 etc.).

[17] Bowersock, Brown, Grabar (1999). It is hoped that any later edition of this work (which claims on its inside front cover to provide a '*comprehensive* guide to the world of late Antiquity' [my emphasis]) will remedy this oversight.

narrative strands, a series of overlying, overlapping and intersecting matrices. No one matrix can be said to represent a unifying structure; rather, it is the combination and interaction of the different frames which gives the epic its ultimate coherence.

Chapters 2 and 3 together form the main argument of this book. They consist of a detailed literary-critical inquiry into two separate, yet interlinked, narrative threads, which give substance and texture to the *Dionysiaca*.[18] Chapter 2 focuses on Nonnus' use of mythological allusion and suggests that, to a certain extent, the narrative of Dionysus consciously parallels the narrative of the entire cycle of Greek mythology, moving from cosmic upheaval and gigantomachy through the wanderings of the Argonauts and the story of the Trojan War down to the end of the age of heroes. Nonnus' use of mythological allusion helps to add a cosmic dimension to his enterprise, and suggests a clear desire to construct an epic poem with a comprehensive/universal aspect.

Chapter 3 focuses on allusive engagement of a different kind, namely self-referential or 'metapoetic' allusion. It considers the way that Nonnus exploits and explores parallelism between himself and his subject, Dionysus: the journey of Dionysus from birth to apotheosis encourages analogy with the journey of Nonnus himself, from 'birth' and development as an epic poet to his entry into the literary pantheon. Both *actor* and *auctor* have a revolutionary mission ahead of them, to bring the gift of Dionysus to the world: where Dionysus attempts to conquer the forces of the Indians and carry his gift to all nations of the world, so Nonnus attempts to conquer the forces of martial epic and carry his Dionysiac poetic to all genres of the literary world. An important aspect of the journeys of both poet and subject is their ongoing and frequently anxious relationship with their respective fathers: Homer and Zeus. Furthermore, a sequence of characters throughout the text function on a symbolic level as potential doublets, models for Dionysus and Nonnus to emulate or to avoid: Typhon represents the figure of a doomed challenger; Brongus represents a positive model of filial success.

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[18] I am conscious that the attempt to unravel any one thread runs counter to the spirit of the text (in which a series of such narratives is inextricably entwined); nevertheless, I hope that the detailed unpicking of individual threads will ultimately help our understanding of the larger fabric.

The brief final chapter will develop ideas from Chapter 1 concerning the challenging experience of reading the *Dionysiaca*. Nonnus' revolutionary Dionysiac poetic does not only have an effect on the established genres of the literary world, it can also be seen to have a profound effect on its readers. The *Dionysiaca* should not merely be seen as a poem about wine, but as an equivalent of that same substance; as such, it provides readers with an analogous experience. For modern critics this experience has generally been negative, reminiscent of the madness of Dionysus, where the text swirls chaotically in front of them in a blur of images and narratives. There is, however, another version of the Dionysiac experience which leads not to madness but to revelation: a chance to see the world (of the text) without rigid divisions and boundaries, where Nonnus and Dionysus, Achilles and Hector, Alexander and Christ all form part of one vast syncretistic whole.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHALLENGE OF EPIC

Introduction

Unreadable as narrative . . . .[1]

The story of the *Dionysiaca*, as first described in the proem to Book 1 [1.1–44], is disarming in its simplicity: Nonnus will sing of Dionysus—[1.12]: ἀειδομένου Διονύσου—starting with his birth and moving on to his mature achievements. Nor does the poet fail to live up to the promise of the introduction: a basic sequence of episodes, what one might call the 'narrative' of Dionysus, can be followed through the forty-eight books of the epic: from the abduction of Europa, via the wanderings of Cadmus, the founding of Thebes, the birth of Dionysus, his struggle with Lycurgus, the Indian War, the tragedy of Pentheus and the madness of the Argive women through to the apotheosis of Dionysus. This arrangement of episodes follows very closely the 'orthodox' mythological narrative as supplied by Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* for the house of Agenor; and would, no doubt, have been familiar to Nonnus' contemporary readers:[2]

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[1] Wiseman (1995) 47.

[2] Whilst Nonnus no doubt had access to one or more handbook of mythology, it is not necessary to assume that he had access to Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*. Nonnus' narrative manipulates (the story of Actaion is placed before rather than after the birth of Dionysus) and expands (he is at his most expansive during his narrative of the Indian War: an episode which is described by Apollodorus in two brief sentences ranges over twenty-eight books of the *Dionysiaca*), but never goes far from this mythological sequence. Doubts have in fact been cast on Apollodorus' two brief references to the Indian War. In the first, at *Bibl.* 3.5.1, we read [ἐπὶ Ἰνδοὺς] διὰ τῆς Θρᾴκης ἠπείγετο (he hurried through Thrace against the Indians)—Frazer (1921) 1.326 n. 1 suggests that the words ἐπὶ Ἰνδούς are out of place: 'Wagner is probably right in thinking that we should either omit them (with Hercher) or insert after them, so as to give the meaning: "and after marching against the Indians he hastened through Thrace"'. In the second instance at *Bibl.* 3.5.2—διελθὼν δὲ Θρᾴκην [καὶ τὴν Ἰνδικὴν ἅπασαν, στήλας ἐκεῖ στήσας] (having crossed Thrace and the whole of India and set up pillars there)—Frazer (1921) 1.330 n. 1 follows Heyne in arguing that the words in square brackets are probably an interpolation. However, both references to India fit perfectly with Nonnus' narrative—namely that Dionysus journeys to India via Thrace, and not the other way around. This invites the

Abduction of Europa 3.1.1 [Book 1]
Cadmus searches for Europa 3.1.1 [1–3]
Cadmus in Delphi 3.4.1 [4]
Founding of Thebes 3.4.1 [5]
Marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia 3.4.2 [5]
Conception and Birth of Dionysus 3.4.3 [7–8]
Ino, Athamas and Melicertes 3.4.3 [9–10]
Actaeon 3.4.4 [5]
Dionysus discovers the vine (ἄμπελος) 3.5.1 [11–12]
Dionysus sets out against the Indians via Thrace [13–17]
Lycurgus 3.5.1 [18, 20–21]
India 3.5.2 [25–40]
Thebes 3.5.2 [44–46]
Argos 3.5.2 [47]
Naxos 3.5.3 [47]
Apotheosis 3.5.3 [48]

The simplicity of this model is, however, deceptive. Nonnus' epic presents a daunting challenge to any reader, in terms both of its length and its high degree of elaboration. At forty-eight books and over 21,000 lines, the *Dionysiaca* is the longest poetic text to have come down to us from Antiquity. And far from restricting itself to the story of Dionysus, there appears to be no story that Nonnus' compendious poem does not attempt to tell. The adventures of Perseus and Heracles, Theseus, Achilles, Odysseus and Ajax (to name but a few) are all woven into the narrative; along with a host of historical and philosophical allusions and references covering every conceivable genre. As anyone who has attempted to read the *Dionysiaca* will know, the story of Dionysus very soon disappears into an apparent chaos of images and characters.

Over the past century, significant attempts have been made to come to terms with the chaotic form and content of Nonnus' epic. In the early decades of the twentieth century two critics, Keydell and Collart, set about the work of 'excavating', stabilising and restoring the text of the *Dionysiaca*.[3] The task was not an easy one: the natural prob-

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suggestion that Nonnus has based his narrative on a pre-existing model, and that the Apollodoran detail need not be spurious.

[3] Keydell (1927, 1932a, 1936); Collart (1930); not to forget the important work of those who came before them, notably Ludwich (1909). Cf. Vian (1976) xxix–xli, esp. xxx; xxxvii: 'En essayant de retrouver les états successifs des *Dionysiaques*, R. Keydell et P. Collart ont souvent fait fausse route par excès de logique et faute d'avoir tenu un compte suffisant de la technique épique de l'auteur'.

lems of textual transmission were compounded by the incomplete state of the poem.[4] In places, particularly in Book 39, episodes appear as disjointed fragments, lacking full integration into the narrative.[5] Explanation for this lack of final revision is uncertain: Keydell and Collart speculated about a conversion to Christianity which caused Nonnus to abandon his 'pagan' epic in favour of his hexameter translation of St. John's Gospel.[6] They went on to suggest that the *Dionysiaca* which has come down to us represents the imperfect assimilation of two narrative plans: mid-way through his epic Nonnus changed course, then abandoned the entire project before he had completed the new version. Keydell thought that Nonnus had initially planned an epic about the Indian War, and that only at a later stage did he expand his narrative, in an attempt to produce a comprehensive story of Dionysus,[7] struggling hard to work up the number of books to forty-eight.[8] Collart imagined a similar process of narrative expansion whereby the poet moved from the Indian War to the whole story of Dionysus;[9] however, he thought that the idea to write even an account of the Indian War evolved over time, gradually assimilating various random episodes into a more coherent narrative.[10]

From his work of restoration each critic drew certain conclusions about how the *Dionysiaca* was to be viewed. Keydell saw the epic as a very loose construction, which relied on juxtaposition for its main effect; Collart, by contrast, suggested that Nonnus' epic was underpinned by wider principles of organization. Later critics can be seen to divide broadly into two camps, following the lead of either Keydell

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[4] See especially the introduction to Keydell's critical edition of 1959.

[5] See Keydell (1936) 910.60–911.30.

[6] See Collart (1930) 273 and Keydell (1936) 911.32–5. Their thinking preserves traces of a rigid pagan/Christian dichotomy which would have made it impossible for a Christian (or pagan) to have been the author of both works. For a more fluid approach to paganism and Christianity with specific reference to Nonnus see Chuvin (1986). On metrical grounds alone (not to mention the questionable logic of abandoning a 21,000-line epic in its final stages in order to write a 7,000-line biblical paraphrase) the *Paraphrase* is more likely to have preceded the *Dionysiaca*; see Wifstrand (1933).

[7] Keydell (1936) 910.5–10: 'Vielmehr erscheinen die Dionysiaka, soweit das knappe Material ein Urteil erlaubt, als eine durch eine umfangreiche Vor- und Nachgeschichte erweiterte Umarbeitung der—vielleicht 24 Bücher umfassenden—Bassarika des Dionysios'.

[8] Keydell (1936) 909.58–9.

[9] Collart (1930) 272.

[10] Collart (1930) 61, 271: 'Nonnos s'est mis à écrire sans avoir établi un plan préconçu, intangible. Peut-être même n'avait-il pas primitivement l'intention de composer un poème suivi'.

or Collart: one side emphasising the presence of structural frameworks; the other eschewing the very idea of structural unity. It is first necessary to consider the theories of those critics who have suggested that the *Dionysiaca* is indeed underpinned by coherent principles of organization.

1. *Structures*

i. *Ring Cycle*

Collart's studies of the composition of the *Dionysiaca* led him to the conclusion that it was possible to detect a thread ['un fil'] which ran through the narrative, giving unity and cohesion to apparently isolated sections.[11] What this thread image really described was the symmetrical arrangement of episodes, otherwise known as ring-composition. He proposed that the sequence of events in Books 33–48 unfolded as a mirror image of events in Books 1–19 (with Books 20–32 forming the epic's structural hinge). Collart used a table, reproduced on the facing page, to illustrate better the major narrative correspondences.[12]

Some of Collart's correspondences are very persuasive. Especially notable are the connections between the beginning and end of the epic: the gigantomachy in Book 48 looks back to the typhonomachy in Books 1–2;[13] whilst Dionysus' erotic adventures and wanderings in the latter books similarly correspond to earlier episodes relating to both Zeus and Cadmus.[14]

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[11] Collart (1930) 59.

[12] Collart (1930) 59.

[13] Cf. Winkler (1974) 127–8. In the later battle Dionysus fights and defeats the Giants unaided, whilst Zeus needed the help of Cadmus to defeat Typhon at the beginning of the epic. See pp. 198–200.

[14] The narrative clearly points to a connection between Dionysus' seduction of Aura and Zeus's abduction of Europa [48.550–1]: καὶ σὺ μετὰ Κρονίωνα λέχος μετὰ λέκτρον ἀμείβων / ἔργα γυναιμανέος μιμήσαο σεῖο τοκῆος (You are just like Cronion changing from bed to bed, and you have imitated the doings of your womanmad father). This also recalls Dionysus' seduction of Nicaea. Winkler (1974) 127 notes the asymmetrical correspondence between the scenes of Europa and Aura: in Book 1 a long flight is followed by a short rape, in Book 48 a short flight by a long rape. Dionysus' Odyssean wanderings [Books 40–8] may look back to the Odyssean

*Erotic adventure of Zeus and Europa [1]
*Gigantomachy: Zeus and Typhon [1–2]
*Voyage of Cadmus: his union with Harmonia [3–5]
*Misfortune in the family of Dionysus: Autonoe, Ino and their children [5]
*Unhappy story of Zeus and Persephone, then Semele [5–8]
*Birth and childhood of Dionysus [9–10]
*Erotic episode of Dionysus with Ampelus and Nicaea, opening scenes of the war: assembly, battle against Orontes, surrender of the Assyrians [10–18]
*Funeral Games for Staphylus [19]
*Indian campaign [20–32]
*Funeral Games for Opheltes [37]
*Erotic episode of Morrheus and Chalcomede, Phaethon, closing scenes of the war, naval battle [33–6 + 38]
*Death of Deriades and end of the Indian War [39–40]
*Unhappy story of Dionysus and Beroe [41–3]
*Misfortune in the family of Dionysus: the tragedy of Pentheus [44–6]
*Voyage of Dionysus to Naxos: his union with Ariadne [47]
*Gigantomachy: Dionysus and the Giants of Thrace [48]
*Erotic adventures of Dionysus with Pallene and Aura [48]

The general structural parallel suggested by Collart between the opening of Book 1 and the close of Book 48 (where the birth of Dionysus is balanced by his apotheosis) is reinforced by more specific intratextual connections between 48.951–78 and 1.1–10, not previously noted. At 1.5 the baby Dionysus is ἡμιτέλεστον (half-complete)—a not inappropriate description for a hero whose story has only just begun; at the end of Book 48 both Dionysus and his son Iacchus achieve τέλος, celebrated along with Zagreus amidst the Eleusinian rites [48.966–8]: καὶ τελεταῖς τρισσῇσιν ἐβακχεύθησαν Ἀθῆναι· / καὶ χορὸν ὀψιτέλεστον ἀνεκρούσαντο πολῖται / Ζαγρέα κυδαίνοντες ἅμα Βρομίῳ καὶ Ἰάκχῳ (In these three celebrations Athens held high revel; in the dance lately made, the Athenians beat the step in honour of Zagreus and Bromius and Iacchus all together).

Alongside Zeus and Dionysus in both these scenes, the presence of Athena deserves to be highlighted: in the proem, Zeus stitches the baby Dionysus into his thigh, and thus has reason to recall the

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wanderings of Cadmus [Books 3–5]. Cf. Collart (1930) 272: 'Ainsi l'oeuvre se présente comme une *Iliade* centrale flanquée de deux troncons d'*Odysée*'.

birth of *Athena* who sprang forth from another unusual part of Zeus's anatomy, his head [1.8–10]; by the closing moments of Book 48, Dionysus has to take care of his own child and entrusts it to the safe-keeping of Athena [48.952ff.]. One may also observe the occurrence of the marriage imagery in both episodes. At 1.1–3 we are introduced to the flaming bed of Semele, and the 'bridal sparks'—[1.2]: νυμφιδίῳ σπινθῆρι—which accompanied the thunderbolt; immediately before his apotheosis Dionysus remembers his own bride Ariadne, who also came to an unfortunate end [48.970]: ἀλλὰ καὶ ὀλλυμένης προτέρης ἐμνήσατο νύμφης (He remembered his wife who had perished earlier).

A further, and hitherto unnoticed, presence in both these scenes is the god Hermes. He has the unique distinction of appearing in both the first and last line of Nonnus' epic. In the final two words of the poem, at 48.978 he appears as υἱέι Μαίης (son of Maia). His presence is felt too in the opening line when we encounter [1.1]: Κρονίδαο διάκτορον (the messenger of Zeus). As we learn from the following verse, διάκτορος is used as a gloss to describe not a person, but a thing: the thunderbolt of Zeus. However, it is impossible to suppress entirely the image of the original Homeric διάκτορος, Hermes—especially given the close relationship which Hermes maintains with Dionysus throughout the epic, and the part he plays in his birth.[15]

The closing section of the epic [48.951–78] thus articulates a close correspondence with the opening lines [1.1–10]. Not only does it present a similar range of characters (Athena, Bacchus, Ariadne the bride, Zeus and Hermes), but also inverts, almost entirely, the order of their appearance in the opening sequence: 'Hermes', Semele the bride, Bacchus, Zeus and Athena. It is also possible that the final scene contains a self-conscious reference to the epic's own circular structure. Before Dionysus ascends to heaven he places a new constellation in the sky in memory of his dearly departed wife Ariadne; a constellation in the form of a 'circular garland' [48.971]: στέφανον περίκυκλον. The image of a 'garland' of poetry is well-attested from the Hellenistic period onwards;[16] it is hard to dismiss the thought that Nonnus is here alluding not just to a crown of stars, but also to the circular garland that is the *Dionysiaca*.

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[15] See, for example, 9.16ff.; 38.75ff.

[16] See p. 134 n. 85.

In spite of the clear supporting evidence, however, there exist major shortcomings in the theory of a Nonnian 'ring cycle'. Vian launched a powerful critique of Collart's analysis, showing how artificial correspondences had been established, such as the connection between the childhood of Dionysus [9–10] and the end of the War [39–40]; and suggesting that Collart's divisions failed to respect the structural integrity of the books of the Indian War, and in particular the pivotal role of Book 25.[17] Nonnus may well engage with the idea of ring-composition, producing correspondences (some very specific) between the opening and the close of his epic, but his 'circle' is nowhere near as precise and carefully set out as Collart suggests.

ii. *Astrology*

In 1930 Viktor Stegemann examined Nonnus' epic from an astrological perspective. He proposed that the *Dionysiaca* describes the story of a god who has come to save the world, heralding the new age of Aion (the mysterious god of eternal time, who springs into prominence in late Antiquity).[18] The key-stone of this theory is his interpretation of the mysterious tablets of Harmonia in Book 12. These tablets (visited by the four Seasons, in the company of the twelve Hours) constitute a set of horoscopes for a cosmic year; each of the six tablets covers the space of two star signs. They begin with the beginnings of Greek mythology and 'all that old Cronus accomplished'—ὅσσα τέλεσσε γέρων Κρόνος [12.45], and move down through to the end of the age of heroes.

In an analogous manner, Nonnus' poem constitutes its own cosmic year. The forty-eight books have specific astrological significance: they are four multiples of twelve, i.e. four seasons each consisting of

[17] These lines summarize the position of Vian (1976) xxii; cf. (1976) xxii: 'Il faut se garder de rechercher des effets de symétrie ou des équilibres numériques trop rigoureux: de tels principes de composition iraient à l'encontre même de l'art poétique de Nonnos'.

[18] Stegemann (1930) 4: 'Durch die Weltgeschichte, die bei ihm kosmische Geschichte ist, verfolgt er diese Entwicklung der Menschheit zum Guten, und indem er also fragt und sucht, wird ihm die Lehre der Astrologie zur lebendigen Gewißheit. Und nun beginnt der Dichter seinen Lobeshymnus, sein riesenhaftes Enkomion auf den Gott Dionysos, den Sohn des Zeus: er steht siegkündend als Wegbereiter am Anfang dieser neuen Zeit. Aus dem Glauben an ihn und an seine Sendung wird dem Dichter die Kraft zum Glauben an die Zukunft des irdischen Daseins'. On Aion see Zuntz (1991).

the twelve signs of the Zodiac.[19] Books 1 and 2 represent the winter months of the world year, which come to a close at the beginning of next Book [3.1]: λῦτο δ' ἀγών, ὅτε χεῖμα παρήλυθεν (The struggle was finished by the end of winter). As the narrative progresses through the story of Cadmus and on to the deeds of Dionysus, so too advance the seasons of the world year.[20]

The majority of critics reject Stegemann's theory out of hand.[21] Although the profound influence of astrology on Nonnus' epic programme is undeniable,[22] the suggestion of a consistent and thoroughgoing astrological system at work in the *Dionysiaca* has been found less persuasive. If the epic starts with plausible astrological markers suggesting the disturbance of a cosmic winter, and leads on to a cataclysmic flood in Book 6 (an event predicted by the second tablet of Harmonia), the same level of allusion is not sustained. Rose is one critic who accepts the basic premise of Stegemann's cosmic year but saves his criticism for the poet of the *Dionysiaca*, and his failure to put the astrological system into working order: '[Nonnus] has lost sight of his own framework, recurring to it only now and again, and so the work which might have been a curious monument of astrological feeling, is but a heap of episodes, loosely connected'.[23]

It seems preferable to refrain from harsh criticism of either Nonnus or Stegemann at this point. Nonnus' epic does preserve traces of an astrological system, which alludes *to some extent* to a new phase of cosmic world order, inaugurated by the saviour god Dionysus. At the same time it would be misleading to suggest that this was the framework upon which Nonnus founded his entire epic.

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[19] Stegemann (1930) 224–5. At 225–30 he discusses the significance of the number 5 for the composition of the poem and for the cult of Aion. For a different numerical analysis of the composition of the *Dionysiaca* see Chamberlayne (1916) 43–6; 43: 'the poem divides itself into six octads, of which the first and last have nothing to do with the Indian War'.

[20] Stegemann (1930) 122: 'Da der Kampf mit dem Winter zu Ende ist, entfallen die weiteren Taten des Kadmos und die Geschichte seines Geschlechtes (Besuch in Samothrake . . . Kadmos' Hochzeit, Semeles Hochzeit und Tod sowie Geburt, Jugend und Taten des Dionysos) auf die folgenden Jahreszeiten des Frühlings, des Sommers und des Herbstes'.

[21] Cf. Collart (1930) 276–7; Stegemann's views are forcefully rejected by Keydell (1961). For a more recent critique see Fauth (1981) 180–4.

[22] On astrology in Nonnus see Feraboli (1985).

[23] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1.xvii; cf. 1.xvi, note c: 'in general it may be said that [Stegemann] credits Nonnos with a more consistent and thorough application of his astrological and mystic ideas than he deserves to have attributed to him'.

iii. *Encomium*

In an appendix to his astrological thesis, Stegemann mooted the idea that the *Dionysiaca* might be viewed as 'ein poetisches Enkomion auf Dionysos'.[24] According to this theory, Nonnus modelled his epic on the principles of the 'Royal Encomium' as set down by Menander Rhetor. Stegemann divided the Dionysiac narrative into corresponding encomiastic sections, from προοίμια (introduction) [Books 1–2], through γένος (ancestry), πατρίς (homeland), γένεσις (birth) [3–5], ἀνατροφή (upbringing) and παιδεία (education) [7–12] to πράξεις (achievements), both κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον (in war) and κατὰ τὴν εἰρήνην (in peace) [13–48], concluding with ἐπίλογος (postscript) [48]. This theory was immediately criticized by Collart on a number of counts: first, an epic poem composed for the glory of a hero would naturally treat the same themes as an encomium, but need not necessarily take an encomiastic form; next, Stegemann had been forced to rearrange certain of Menander's prescriptions to bring them into line with the arrangement of the *Dionysiaca*; in addition, Stegemann introduced a number of Nonnian digressions into the encomiastic frame without good reason, whilst passing over others in silence.[25]

Such criticism notwithstanding, the idea of an encomiastic framework has generally been well received.[26] A detailed study by E. D. Lasky suggested that 'the virtues of perceiving the encomium as the underlying scheme are manifest' and came to the conclusion that 'the encomium is the unifying influence of the poem'.[27] Certainly, the scheme can be seen to have an important bearing on the basic composition of the narrative; it seems especially useful for our understanding of Books 1–6, the prehistory of Dionysus. Yet, given the diffuse and expansive form of Nonnus' narrative, it is hard to feel confident about Lasky's assertion of 'unifying influence'. It is particularly difficult to imagine how parallels between the Indian War and

[24] Stegemann (1930) 209; see in general (1930) 209–30.

[25] Collart (1930) 276.

[26] Gerstinger (1943–7) 81; D'Ippolito (1964) 42 is happy to accept the influence of the encomium (he points out at 27 n. 1 [in a faintly accusatory manner?] that Gerstinger came up with the idea two years before Stegemann published his work); Vian (1976) xx–xxii.

[27] Lasky (1978) 360 (article based on unpublished dissertation (1975) 'The influence of the encomium on the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnos of Panopolis'); cf. Vian (1976) xx: 'Nonnos a entendu écrire une épopée à la gloire de Dionysos et il l'a coulée dans le schéma traditionnel de l'*encômion* royal'.

the rhetorical category of πράξεις κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον could be sustained at anything but the most superficial level throughout the books of the Indian War. The encomiastic framework can provide a useful reference point, but it is neither dominant nor exclusive as a unifying influence.

iv. *Epyllion*

The critic D'Ippolito accepted the influence of the encomium, but did not consider that it provided the underlying frame. He sought instead to establish the importance of epyllion in the construction of Nonnus' epic.[28] On a general level, in contrast to the 'classic' model of Homeric epic, the *Dionysiaca* may be characterized as both episodic in form and highly erotic in content—two features which owe a clear debt to Hellenistic epyllia.[29] More specifically, D'Ippolito suggested that epyllia gave a structural coherence to Nonnus' narrative: the *Dionysiaca* can be viewed as a sequence of epyllion-style episodes, based around the central 'epic' section of the Indian War.[30] Epyllia thus take us to the opening of the Indian war in Book 13, when Nonnus' work assumes a form, at least externally, much closer to that of classical epic.[31] After the end of the war in Book 40, the poem resumes its epyllionic form.[32]

The idea has much to recommend it: especially appealing is the way that D'Ippolito's theory attempts to reconcile the central, and to some extent unified, books of the Indian War with the more discursive episodes which surround them. Nevertheless, his arrangement of episodes is not quite so neat as it appears. First, the beginning of the Indian War in Book 13 does not square with the division of

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[28] D'Ippolito (1964).

[29] D'Ippolito (1964) 37–57.

[30] D'Ippolito (1964) 42: 'Il fatto che le *Dionisiache* siano modellate sullo schema dello encomio epico no esclude però che esse si presentano come una sequenza di epilli, interrotta solo al centro dal lungo episodio della guerra indiana'. Cf. Lasky (1978) 360 n. 11: 'Interestingly . . . [D'Ippolito] does not attempt to view Menander's scheme as in any way unifying the epyllia of the poem'.

[31] D'Ippolito (1964) 61: 'Dal libro XIII à inizio l'episodio più importante del poema, la guerra indiana, e l'ἔπος assume una forma, almeno esteriormente, molto vicina all'epica classica'.

[32] D'Ippolito (1964) 68: 'Nei libri XLI–XLVIII, terminato ormai il racconto della guerra, la composizione del poema ritorna ad essere, come nei primi dodici libri, quella di epilli susseguentisi'.

the epic into octads.[33] Moreover, within Books 13–40, the 'epic' section of Nonnus' poem, we encounter a number of episodes which could be described as epyllia, such as Nicaea [15–16], Brongus [17], Morrheus and Chalcomede [33–5], and Phaethon [38].[34] Further, the arrangement of the *Dionysiaca* into either epic or epyllion-style sections fails to take adequate account of the number of different generic influences in operation, from the Greek novel to Greek tragedy, from pastoral to πάτρια. This all points to the suggestion that Nonnus did not conceive of a clear epic/epyllion dichotomy—at least not as described by D'Ippolito; and leads to the conclusion that such an epyllion theory, though broadly illuminating, does not provide a clear conceptual framework for the understanding of Nonnian epic.

2. *Rejecting structures*

A number of critics from Keydell onwards have chosen to view the *Dionysiaca* in a quite different way. Instead of seeking out deep underlying structures and clear principles of organization, they argue that the various episodes are arranged and ordered by juxtaposition: one scene set off against the next, with little reference to the broader picture. In the words of Keydell:

> Die Ereignisse des langen Gedichtes rollen zwar in buntem Wechsel, aber ohne klare Beziehung von Ursache und Wirkung, von Spiel und Gegenspiel wie auf einer Fläche vor uns ab; was sich von seinen Schlachtschilderungen sagen läßt, daß sie aus Mosaikstückchen zusammengesetzt sind, das gilt im großen von dem ganzen Epos. Die tragende Idee des Ganzen, daß nämlich Dionysos sich durch seine Taten den Himmel erwerben muß, ist durch die Überfülle des Stoffes so verdeckt, daß sie dem Leser kaum zum Bewußtsein kommt. Das Ziel des Dichters ist nicht der Zusammenhang des Ganzen, sondern die Wirkung des Einzelnen, nicht Klarheit der Linie sondern Intensität der Farbe.[35]

[33] D'Ippolito (1964) 58–68: Books 1–8 take us up to the birth of Dionysus; 9–16 comprise the adolescence of Dionysus, the first victory in the Indian War and the episode of Nicaea; 17–24 continue the Indian War up to the battle at the river Hydaspes; 25–32 move from the set piece σύγκρισις to the deception of Zeus by Hera; 33–40 comprise the last stage of the war and Dionysus' triumphal return from the East; 41–8 follow the diverse travels of Dionysus, until his ascension into heaven; cf. Chamberlayne (1916) 43–6.

[34] Noted as such (though not explained) by D'Ippolito (1964) 63–6.

[35] Keydell (1936) 910.14–28. Cf. Vian (1976) xviii: 'On ne doit . . . pas s'attendre à trouver dans l'oeuvre une architecture claire et harmonieuse'; Abel-Wilmanns

(The long poem unfolds, to be sure, in a colourful sequence, but without clear connection between cause and effect, between play and counterplay, as though on a surface before us. What one can say about his battle-scenes is largely applicable to the whole epic: they are composed as pieces of mosaic. The inspired idea of the whole, namely that Dionysus has to earn heaven through his deeds, is covered over with such a superabundance of material, that it hardly enters the consciousness of the reader. The aim of the poet is not the coherence of the whole, but the effect of individual scenes, not clarity of line but intensity of colour.)

Keydell's use of the mosaic metaphor makes a suggestive connection between the visual arts and literature in the period of late Antiquity, which deserves to be pursued a little further here.[36] The relationship between literary and visual art in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries AD has been recently explored by Michael Roberts in an important study. Although his investigation focused exclusively on Latin poetics, his observations on the 'jeweled style' are germane to our present inquiry into Nonnian epic. 'The art of the poet,' says Roberts, 'lay in setting the variegated pieces off against each other to best effect . . . The poetic text was understood in visual terms; the poet strove to replicate or outdo effects he saw in the world around

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(1977) 211: 'Die Dionysiaka bestehen aus einer Menge einzelner, abgeschlossener, untereinander mäßig verbundener Erzählungen; weder Handlungen noch Figuren noch Handlungszeiten und -orte formen miteinander echte Systeme. So stellen die Dionysiaka im Gesamt kein geschlossenes System dar, die Gesamterzählung bildet keine einheitliche finale Handlung, deshalb auch keine semantische Einheit im Sinne *einer* kohärenten Erzählung'; 212: 'Jedes Element existiert in erster Linie für sich selbst, nicht als Teil eines Ganzen'.

[36] Other critics have used the metaphors of textile and mosaic in order to assist their investigations into the *Dionysiaca*: Vian (1976) 90: 'Nonnos compose souvent son oeuvre à la manière d'une mosaïque'; in the 'mythological introduction' to the Loeb translation (Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1.xii) we read that Nonnus, 'gives us neither living figures nor even a gallery of pleasing portraits or statues, but rather *a faded and overcrowded tapestry*, moving a little now and then as the breath of his sickly and unwholesome fancy stirs it' [my emphasis]; cf. Braden (1974) 863: 'Nonnian actions are not causally connected (*propter hoc*), but are, in one of his own favorite terms, simply *geitones*, neighbors of one another, as in a tapestry or mosaic'. Nonnus' text itself seems to encourage such metaphors: the story of the weaving of Aphrodite in Book 24 invites us to consider the correspondences between the *Dionysiaca* and a woven textile (see Hopkinson (1994a) 155–62; (1994b) 21–2); during his visit to Tyre, Dionysus notices mosaic patterns which clearly belong to the contemporary world of the fifth century AD [40.354–5]: καί οἱ ὀπιπεύοντι λιθογλώχινες ἀγυιαί / μαρμαρυγὴν ἀνέφαινον ἀμοιβαίοιο μετάλλου (He gazed at the streets paved with mosaic of stones and shining metals); cf. 3.138–40. Whilst in Tyre Dionysus marvels at a vast range of textiles [40.301–3]. For further reflections of contemporary culture in Nonnus' epic see especially Keydell (1955).

him'.[37] One important effect of this visual 'replication' concerns the relationship between the part and the whole. To quote Roberts again, '[i]n both art and literature there is a tendency to fragmentation and miniaturization of the compositional plane at the expense of the organic conception of the whole'.[38]

The idea of a late-Antique 'jeweled style' appears to lend powerful support of Keydell's view of Nonnian epic, where the eye for detail is so much in evidence. As a product of his own age, informed and conditioned by contemporary aesthetic preferences for glittering surface[39] and polished juxtaposition, we need hardly be surprised if he 'prefers to focus on intense description of individual scenes at the expense of narrative coherence'.[40] Nevertheless, the theory of juxtaposition fails to satisfy in one significant way, namely in its failure to engage with, and explain, those traces and 'fragments' of narrative structure which have been noted by Collart et al.

So far, Collartian theories have proved too rigid, Keydellian ones too loose. What is needed is a third way of approaching Nonnus' text which will somehow mediate between the two extremes. In order to achieve this, it is important to take account of the one prominent way in which Nonnus' project ran counter to the aesthetic principles of his age, namely in terms of its size.[41] For Nonnus was attempting to write a large-scale epic in the fifth century AD, at a time when epyllia, encomia and πάτρια, works of small scale and modest ambition, were the prevalent literary modes of expression in hexameter.[42] Even allowing for gaps in our knowledge of the literary landscape of late Antiquity, it seems difficult to pretend that Nonnus'

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[37] Roberts (1989) 65.

[38] Roberts (1989) 97; 115: 'Although scenes may be thematically related . . . there is little or no attempt to establish a spatial or chronological relationship between them. In the habitual fashion of late antiquity, paratactical arrangement is preferred'.

[39] An explicit correspondence between Nonnus' epic and contemporary stylistic trends of artistic representation was drawn by Riemschneider (1957) 46ff.; with reference to late-Antique portraiture she showed how Nonnus shares a similar predilection for 'surface', for flat, two-dimensional images; Riemschneider (1957) 48: 'Die auffallendste Beobachtung, die man angesichts der sprachlichen Auswahl des Nonnos macht, ist die, daß sein Weltbild völlig unräumlich und unplastisch ist. Er kennt nur die Linie.'

[40] Whitby (1994) 112.

[41] Pisander of Laranda had written his successful epic narrative in sixty books, but that had been two hundred years earlier.

[42] There exists no entirely satisfactory survey of late Greek hexameter poetry. Toohey (1992) provides a useful, though limited, overview; see also Said & Trédé (1999); for the Latin tradition see Bright (1987), Roberts (1989).

Dionysiaca did not stand like a colossus above the works of Triphiodorus and Colluthus, Olympiodorus, Pamprepius and their ilk.[43] Nonnus' attempt to write the story of Dionysus in forty-eight books must at some level come into tension, and even conflict, with the ornate and episodic style in which it is written. The question thus needs to be posed: how was it possible for Nonnus to reconcile the jeweled style (with all its juxtaposition, embellishment and surface glitter) with the epic desire to tell a grand, unifying narrative?[44]

The answer favoured by most previous critics would have been to suggest that such a negotiation was not possible. And that even if it were possible for a late-Antique poet to write a successful grand narrative, then that poet was not Nonnus. Lesky is representative of the traditionally dim view taken of Nonnus' poetic competence when he says: '[s]o great was this poet's frenzy that the poem's composition fell a victim to it. He made neither careful preparations, nor kept anything in reserve'.[45] There is, however, another approach to this question, suggested by the fact that, as has already been shown, Nonnus' epic was an enormous contemporary success, a work which remained popular and influential for generations after its first publication. The reception of the *Dionysiaca* suggests that, to ancient readers at least, Nonnus' epic *did* represent a successful co-ordination of jeweled scenes and larger frame. What was it, then, that ancient readers saw, and that modern critics have so patently failed to see? How did contemporary readers engage with the text of the *Dionysiaca*?

Any attempt to answer this question must itself engage with the proem to Book 1, where Nonnus sets out his poetic programme for the forthcoming epic. Here, right at the beginning of the epic, Nonnus calls upon his neighbour Proteus, the old man of the sea, to appear before him:

> ἀλλὰ χοροῦ ψαύοντι Φάρῳ παρὰ γείτονι νήσῳ
> στήσατέ μοι Πρωτῆα πολύτροπον, ὄφρα φανείη
> ποικίλον εἶδος ἔχων, ὅτι ποικίλον ὕμνον ἀράσσω.
> εἰ γὰρ ἐφερπύσσειε δράκων κυκλούμενος ὀκλῷ,
> μέλψω θεῖον ἄεθλον, ὅπῃ κισσώδεϊ θύρσῳ

[43] *Pace* Whitby (1994) who tells how, from a stylistic point of view, 'Nonnus did not spring fully armed into an unsuspecting universe'.

[44] An obvious comparandum would be Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which negotiates a similar tension between episodic epyllia and the grand epic narrative; see, for example, Otis (1970) 46–7.

[45] Lesky (1966) 817.

φρικτὰ δρακοντοκόμων εδαΐζετο φῦλα Γιγάντων·
εἰ δὲ λέων φρίξειεν ἐπαυχενίην τρίχα σείων,
Βάκχον ἀνευάξω βλοσυρῆς ἐπὶ πήχεϊ Ῥείης
μαζὸν ὑποκλέπτοντα λεοντοβότοιο θεαίνης·
εἰ δὲ θυελλήεντι μετάρσιος ἅλματι ταρσῶν
πόρδαλις ἀΐξῃ πολυδαίδαλον εἶδος ἀμείβων,
ὑμνήσω Διὸς υἷα, πόθεν γένος ἔκτανεν Ἰνδῶν
πορδαλίων ὀχέεσσι καθιππεύσας ἐλεφάντων·
εἰ δέμας ἰσάζοιτο τύπῳ συός, υἷα Θυώνης
ἀείσω ποθέοντα συοκτόνον εὔγαμον Αὔρην,
ὀψιγόνου τριτάτοιο Κυβηλίδα μητέρα Βάκχου·
εἰ δὲ πέλοι μιμηλὸν ὕδωρ, Διόνυσον ἀείσω
κόλπον ἁλὸς δύνοντα κορυσσομένοιο Λυκούργου·
εἰ φυτὸν αἰθύσσοιτο νόθον ψιθύρισμα τιταίνων,
μνήσομαι Ἰκαρίοιο, πόθεν παρὰ θυάδι ληνῷ
βότρυς ἀμιλλητῆρι ποδῶν ἐθλίβετο ταρσῷ.

(But bring me a partner for your dance in the neighbouring island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns, that he may appear in all his diversity of shapes, since I strike up a diverse hymn. For if as a serpent he should glide along his winding trail, I will sing my god's achievement, how with ivy-wreathed wand he destroyed the horrid hosts of Giants serpent-haired. If as a lion he shake his bristling mane, I will cry 'Euoi!' to Bacchus on the arm of buxom Rheia, stealthily draining the breast of the lionbreeding goddess. If as a leopard he shoot up into the air with a stormy leap from his pads, changing shape like a master-craftsman, I will hymn the son of Zeus, how he slew the Indian nation, with his team of pards riding down the elephants. If he make his figure like the shape of a boar, I will sing Thyone's son, love-sick for Aura the desirable, boarslayer, daughter of Cybele, mother of the third Bacchus late-born. If he be mimic water I will sing Dionysus diving into the lap of the sea, when Lycurgus armed himself. If he become a quivering tree and tune a counterfeit whispering, I will tell of Icarius, how in the jubilant winepress his feet crushed the grape in rivalry.) [1.13–33]

The poet demonstrates his own versatility by matching all of Proteus' transformations with transformations of his own. By containing Proteus within the proem Nonnus makes an open declaration, and demonstration, of his poetic principles: like Proteus, the *Dionysiaca* will have a transformative, and ποικίλος, nature.[46] Just as Proteus exists in both one and many forms, so the single form of the *Dionysiaca* will contain any number of different forms, of different narratives. Nonnus'

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[46] On Nonnian ποικιλία see D'Ippolito (1964) 37–57; String (1966) 33–70; Gonzalez-Senmartî (1981).

contest with Proteus also serves, I would suggest, to teach readers an early and important lesson about how they should engage with the polytropic narrative of the *Dionysiaca*: as the poet follows his neighbour[47] through his multiple transformations, so the reader must follow Nonnus through the twists and turns of his narrative.

We have seen how numerous modern critics have approached the slippery and polysemous form of Nonnus' epic: grasping hold of a particular narrative, they attempt to hold to it doggedly until it surrenders its 'true' form. In each case, the contest ends in failure, as the epic ultimately eludes their grasp, and transforms itself into yet another form. However, it does not necessarily follow, as other critics have suggested, that the efforts of the reader to pin down the narrative are entirely futile; that it is sufficient to appreciate the dazzling, jeweled, and ποικίλος epic, as though from a distance, without 'direct' engagement. It is, without doubt, impossible to pin down this shape-shifting narrative to one single discrete form; but this does not mean that the *attempt* to pin it down is itself vain. In fact, I would suggest that the attempt is all. As the proemial 'contest' between Proteus and Nonnus suggests, this is a text which deliberately flaunts its slippery form. It draws readers in; encourages them to engage in the active pursuit of a narrative form which constantly and wilfully resists attempts to pin it down. Here, it is not the end result that is important, but the *process* of allusive engagement, the dynamic challenge of reading.

In other words, I would suggest that Nonnus' epic is neither clearly structured, nor clearly unstructured; rather, it is a coordination of different narratives and structures. The story of Dionysus is not a single story; it is constructed out of a series of different frames (epyllionic, astrological, encomiastic etc.), which all intersect, and overlie one another. The *Dionysiaca* does not offer one, but a multiplicity of viewing points, a multiplicity of ways 'into' the text. Nor is the relationship between these frames (or matrices) combative and mutually exclusive, but complementary and open-ended: there is ultimately no straight choice between reading the *Dionysiaca* as (say) an encomium or as an astrological epic; at different times, different matrices slip and slide into prominence.

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[47] Close in terms of geographical and aesthetic proximity.

Here then is a third way of understanding Nonnus' epic. The various fragments and echoes of narrative structure present in the *Dionysiaca* do not fail to signify, nor do they signify failure on the part of the poet to unite a discontinuous and highly descriptive style with a continuous narrative. They must instead be seen as a sign of his success. For a late-Antique audience, well versed in the art of allusive engagement, of seeking out meanings and allegories hidden below the surface,[48] Nonnus' constantly evasive narrative (at once allusive, elusive and illusive) must have provided them with the ultimate reading experience, the ultimate challenge of epic. As modern readers, it is a challenge which still lies in front of us.

[48] It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the late-Antique world was obsessed by hidden meanings and allegorical interpretations to an unparalleled degree. In literature and art, both pagan and Christian, meaning was invariably sought beneath the surface. Doody (1996) 168: 'Modes of thinking of the Late Antique period . . . were evidently extremely hospitable to the presence of allegory and symbol in narrative'; cf. Elsner (1995) 9: 'In sixth-century Byzantine culture . . . images had an exegetic, a scriptural relationship with what they represented. Indeed, everything was an "image"—the emperor was an image of Christ, the state of the divine economy, the good Christian life of the lives of the saints. Underlying such a conceptual frame lay a virtuosic typological system whereby everything in the world could be explained as an allegory or symbol of the other World where God dwelt'; see especially Lamberton (1986) 144–61 ch. 4: 'The interaction of allegorical interpretation and deliberate allegory'. Nonnus' contemporary Proclus read Homer as Neoplatonist allegory (Lamberton (1986) 162–232); Philip the Philosopher, who may be dated as early as the late fifth century, wrote an allegorical interpretation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*; Lamberton (1986) 148–57; see his Appendix I pp. 306–11 for a translation of Philip's interpretation. Musaeus' epyllion *Hero and Leander* has been interpreted as a Christian Neoplatonist allegory; see Lamberton (1986) 149, 157–61; Gelzer (1975) 316–22.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CYCLE OF DIONYSUS

Introduction

> The poem professes to be the history of Dionysus, but Nonnos manages to include all the stories of Greek mythology he could find in earlier collections.[1]

A brief glance at the index to Rouse's Loeb edition of the *Dionysiaca* is sufficient to confirm the encyclopedic scope of Nonnus' enterprise: within the forty-eight books of his epic there seems to be no story that Nonnus does *not* tell, no mythological figure to whom he does not allude. Critics have, in general, been unimpressed by the poet's encyclopedic aspirations. The vast scatter of mythological references and allusions is seen to overwhelm the story of Dionysus, to contribute to a feeling not of narrative cohesion, but of narrative chaos.[2] This chapter will focus on precisely those references and allusions. In the pages that follow it will be argued that Nonnus' use of allusion is neither incompetent nor arbitrary; that far from adding confusion, it provides an important conceptual framework for our understanding of the narrative of Dionysus.

In 1991, a short article by Francis Vian made a significant advance in our understanding of Nonnus' use of mythological allusion.[3] It hardly needs to be said that the *Dionysiaca* is saturated with allusions to the epic poems of Homer: there is hardly a line in the whole poem that does not contain some Homeric reminiscence—in terms of vocabulary or imagery. This does not mean, of course, that the *Dionysiaca* is uniformly 'Homeric' throughout. The accretion of Homeric references, half-quotations and parallel episodes around the narrative

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[1] Rouse (1940) 1.vii.

[2] Cf. Lesky (1966) 817: 'In rich profusion stories of gods are interwoven with astral legends after the Alexandrian manner into a plot whose unity at times threatens to be overwhelmed by all the accessories'.

[3] Vian (1991a); the germ of this idea may be traced back as far as Vian (1976) xxiv.

of the Indian War has long been recognized.[4] This cluster of allusions has a striking and significant effect upon the way we approach Books 13–40; it encourages us to understand the Indian War in terms of the Trojan War, to consider Nonnus' narrative as a direct response to Homer's *Iliad.* In his article Vian offered an important refinement of this view. He pointed out that Books 13–40 do not merely allude to the last year of the Trojan War, as it is presented in the *Iliad*, but rather to the *whole* of the Trojan Cycle—from the assembly of the troops at Aulis to the fall of the city.[5] The narrative of the Indian War can now be seen to have a more ambitious scope: it expands and reshapes material not just from the *Iliad*, but from the wider poetic traditions of the Trojan Cycle.[6] This new perspective on the scope of Nonnus' poem changes our view of Nonnus' relationship with Homer: the aggrandizement of his narrative must now be considered as part of Nonnus' wider strategy to rival and even surpass his Homeric predecessor.[7]

It comes as something of a surprise to discover that Vian did not develop his theory beyond the brief sketch of 1991.[8] When he returned to Books 13–40 in his article, 'Dionysus in the Indian War: a contribution to a study of the structure of the *Dionysiaca*', he made no reference to Nonnus' adaptation of the Trojan Cycle,[9] nor have his ideas been developed elsewhere.[10] I believe that Vian's theory offers a suggestive reading of Nonnus' engagement with mythological allusion in the books of the Indian War, which deserves to be investigated further. This chapter will attempt to put flesh on the bare bones of Vian's theory, to show how Nonnus does exploit parallels

[4] See, for example, Chamberlayne (1916) 46.

[5] Vian (1991a) 8: 'Ma occorre súbito aggiungere che Nonno vede piú grande d'Omero. L'*Iliade* non canta che un solo episodio del ciclo troiano, un episodio importante dato che termina con la morte di Ettore, ma per nulla decisivo. Nonno, al contrario, ha presente tutto il ciclo troiano'.

[6] It should, of course, be remembered that the *Iliad* tells far more of the Trojan Cycle than the anger of Achilles in the last year of the war. The catalogue of troops in *Iliad* 2 recalls the first assembly of the Greek troops at Aulis; the τειχοσκοπία in *Iliad* 3 suggests a stage in the fighting long before the tenth year of the war. Although the *Iliad* ends with the death and burial of Hector, significant forward glances are made to the close of the war, especially to the death of Achilles and the fate of Astyanax.

[7] Cf. Vian (1991a) 8: 'Allarga dunque il quadro strettamente omerico all'insieme dei *Troica* e giustifica con questo fatto la sua pretesa di superare Omero'.

[8] Vian (1991a) 7–8.

[9] Vian (1994a) 97 n. 8: 'literary sources are not the concern of the present essay'.

[10] The idea is briefly referred to, but not elaborated upon, by Hopkinson (1994b) 17.

and analogies with the story of the Trojan War, in his own narrative of the Indian war; how the adventures of Dionysus in India and his battle with King Deriades resonate with the 'memory' of the adventures of Achilles and the rest of the Greek army in the Troad. Such an investigation would on its own represent an important advance in our understanding of both Nonnus' techniques of composition and his relationship with his Homeric predecessor. I hope, however, to advance beyond Vian's purview.

One of the major shortcomings of the Trojan Cycle theory is that it is not contextualized with the rest of the epic: no attempt is made to come to terms with the relationship between Books 13–40 and the significant sections of the narrative which appear on either side of it. How does Nonnus' use of material from the Trojan Cycle relate to his use of mythological material in Books 1–12 and 40–8? I intend to integrate the books of the Indian War into a detailed study of the epic as a whole. It is my contention that Nonnus' symbolic use of mythological allusion is not restricted to Books 13–40, but has an important function throughout the epic. In Books 1–12 it is possible to discern clusters of allusions which recall the battle of the Titans, the voyage of the Argonauts and the birth and early years of Achilles. These allusions point to significant moments in the grand cycle of Greek mythology and prepare the reader's passage into Book 13 and the beginning of Nonnus' 'Trojan War'. Nor does the end of the war in Book 40 mean the end of the mythological symbolism which Nonnus has exploited up to this point. After the Trojan War came the story of the returning Greek heroes, most famously the *nostos* of Odysseus; so in Book 40 Dionysus sets out on his long journey 'home' to Olympus, his own Dionysiac *Odyssey*.

The sense of mythological inclusiveness which Rouse so rightly observed, the encyclopedic/compendious spirit of Nonnian epic, can now be seen from a new perspective. The *Dionysiaca* is not an inert and chaotic repository of Greek mythological sources; it is an epic which actively strives to contain the entirety of Greek mythology (from Titanomachic opening to Odyssean end) within its forty-eight books. The *Dionysiaca* should be seen not simply as the story of Dionysus which happens to touch in passing on a large number of other stories; it represents, I would argue, a deliberate attempt is to tell the whole of Greek mythology *through* the story of Dionysus, a conscious attempt to match, cap and replace the traditional cycle of mythology with a new, all-embracing, cycle of Dionysus.

Mythological Cycle

Before investigation into mythological allusion proceeds further, it will be useful to say a few words about both mythology and allusion. I first wish to explore the 'traditional cycle of mythology': what this notion would have meant to a poet from the fifth century AD, and what sources were available to him. No discussion of Greek mythology can avoid engagement with the 'Epic Cycle', a sequence of mythological narratives dating from the seventh and sixth centuries BC which are 'made up out of various poets' (ἐκ διαφόρων ποιητῶν συμπληρούμενος), and which 'begin with the legendary marriage of Uranus and Gaia . . . and go on through the various myths related by the Greeks about the gods and some few stories that are true in history' (ἄρχεται μὲν ἐκ τῆς Οὐρανοῦ καὶ Γῆς μυθολογουμένης μίξεως . . . διαπορεύεται δὲ τά τε ἄλλως περὶ θεῶν τοῖς Ἕλλησι μυθολογούμενα καὶ εἴ πού τι καὶ πρὸς ἱστορίαν ἐξαληθίζεται).[11] With the distinguished exceptions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, these poems have disappeared almost without trace; though the time and manner of their disappearance remain a moot point.

On the evidence of Photius' epitome, the poems of the Cycle were still accessible in the fifth century AD: λέγει δὲ ὡς τοῦ ἐπικοῦ Κύκλου τὰ ποιήματα διασῴζεται καὶ σπουδάζεται τοῖς πολλοῖς οὐχ οὕτω διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὡς διὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων ([Proclus] says that the poems of the Epic Cycle were preserved and studied in general not so much for their quality, as for the related sequence of events).[12] There seems, on the face of it, no good reason to contradict the report of Proclus, the fifth-century Neoplatonist. Critics, however, incredulous that the poems could still be in existence at this time, and lacking any corroborating evidence, have been reluctant to

[11] A description which comes from Photius' epitome of Proclus' *Chrestomathia* at Phot. *Bibl.* 319a 21–6; see the edition of Henry (1967) 5.157; *EGF* p. 13. We learn more precisely that the Cycle was made up out of the following sequence of poems: *Titanomachy*; *Oidipodeia, Thebais, Epigoni* [the Theban Cycle]; *Cypria, Iliad, Aethiopis, Ilias Mikra, Iliou Persis, Nostoi, Odyssey, Telegony* [the 'Trojan' Cycle]. In addition to Photius there exist a series of Iliadic scholia which appear to be actual extracts of Proclus' prose summary of the Trojan part of the Epic Cycle (see Davies (1989) 7). On the Epic Cycle in general see Severyns (1928); Rzach (1922); Huxley (1969); Griffin (1977); Davies (1989); M. L. West in Hornblower & Spawforth, eds. (1996) 531. On [Hesiod's] *Catalogue of Women*, an early attempt to place the Greek myths in a sequential arrangement, see West (1985).

[12] Procl. *Chrestom.* at Phot. *Bibl.* 319a 230–3.

take his statement at face value.[13] Regardless of such suspicion, it is hard to believe that the statement recorded by Photius was not true *at some time*. Gilbert Murray's ingenious 'solution' was to back-date Proclus' words altogether: 'the last sentence has probably been copied verbally together with the rest of its context from handbook to handbook through many centuries'.[14] Another chronological solution involves the back-dating not just of Proclus' words, but of Proclus' own person: from fifth-century Neoplatonist to third-century grammarian.

Such an idea was recently countered by Lamberton in his study of Neoplatonist allegory. He argued that there is 'no compelling reason' to reject the Byzantine attribution of the *Chrestomathia* to the fifth-century Proclus.[15] Against this view I would argue that there is in fact very good reason to query, and almost certainly to reject, the later attribution. One piece of evidence which Lamberton fails to consider is an account of the third-century AD poet Pisander of Laranda by the sixth-century writer John Philoponus [*EGF* p. 14]: Πεισάνδρου δὲ τὴν αὐτὴν πραγματείαν ποιησαμένου, λέγω δὴ πλείστην ἱστορίαν κατὰ τάξιν συναγαγόντος, ἀντιποιησαμένου δὲ καὶ εὐεπείας καταφρονηθῆναί φασι τὰ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ ποιητῶν συγγράμματα. διὸ μηδὲ εὑρίσκεσθαι τὰ ποήματα τὰ ἐν τοῖς κύκλοις ἀναγεγραμμένα (Pisander made the same arrangement, namely a comprehensive history set down in order. Since there was a preference for his fine words, they say that the writings of previous poets fell out of favour. For this reason the poems of the Cycle can no longer be found). As is testified by his own treatise *Against Proclus on the eternity of the world*, Philoponus was well acquainted with the works of the Neoplatonic Proclus. It is hard to believe that Philoponus would have attributed the demise of the Cycle to the third-century AD Pisander, if he knew that the poems still existed for the fifth-century Proclus to summarize. His account points most logically to the conclusion that the *Chrestomathia* was written by the earlier Proclus in the third century AD and that

13 Since fragments of the original epics do not square with Proclus' summary (as preserved in the Iliadic scholia), it has been argued that Proclus must not have had the texts of the Epic Cycle before him. This is presumably the basis for M. L. West's assertion in Hornblower & Spawforth, eds. (1996) 531 that 'Proclus' knowledge . . . is demonstrably indirect'. The argument is fairly countered by Davies (1989) 7–8, who points out that the summaries may well have been adapted to fit their role as a crib for the *Iliad*.

14 Murray (1934) 340.

15 Lamberton (1986) 177; see also (1986) 178 n. 51.

the poems of the original Cycle were long since extinct by the time of Proclus the Neoplatonist.[16]

It seems therefore most unlikely that Nonnus had access to the early epic poems which constituted the Cycle of Proclus.[17] Nevertheless he did have access to a vast range of mythological narratives stretching from the union of Uranus and Gaia down to the death of Odysseus: from Hesiod and Homer, through the Greek tragedians, down to Hellenistic and late-Antique epic and epyllion.[18] These various narratives all had a place within the general cycle of Greek mythology. Although this cycle was far more inclusive and fluid than the narrowly defined Cycle of Proclus, it remained broadly congruent with it: to an early part of this cycle belong theogonies, battles of Titans and Giants and catalclysms; the protagonists in the story of Thebes (along with those who participate in the adventures of Heracles and the voyage of the Argonauts) come from a generation (or more) before the heroes of Troy; and the Trojan War is inevitably followed by the returns of the Greeks. This congruence is well illustrated by the prose handbook of Apollodorus, one of a number of such mythological encyclopedias which must have been accessible to Nonnus.

Mythological handbooks were not the only works which attempted to 'reconstruct' the cycle of Greek mythology. Pisander of Laranda produced an epic in sixty books, which encompassed the history of the world down to the time of Alexander the Great. According to John Philoponus, whose testimony is quoted above, Pisander's poem was not just analogous to the Epic Cycle, but actually eclipsed it, and brought about its demise.[19] As far as can be ascertained,[20] the Ἡρωϊκαὶ θεογαμίαι (Heroic Marriages of the Gods) began with the marriage not of Uranus and Gaia but Zeus and Hera, and moved on to describe the battle between Zeus and the giants and the flood which covered the earth. This was followed by a description of the

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[16] Severyns (1928) 75–6; not mentioned by Lamberton (1986).

[17] Cf. Vian (1959); (1963–9), who argues that the third-century AD Quintus did not have direct knowledge of the original poems of the Epic Cycle; Hopkinson (1994c) 105–8.

[18] On the production and distribution of classical texts in Byzantine Egypt see Maehler (1997). Nonnus' sources will be considered more fully as the chapter progresses.

[19] See p. 29.

[20] The pitiful fragments and tantalizing testimonia are to be found in Heitsch (1964) 2.44–7; cf. Keydell (1935); (1937) 145–6.

twelve unions between Zeus and mortal women, which formed the framework for Pisander's grand narrative of the history of the world (the last of Zeus's heroic theogamies was with Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great).

It is impossible to make a clear and decisive estimate of the influence of Pisander's poem on the *Dionysiaca.* However, the scant Pisandrian fragments that do remain suggest an intimate relationship between the two poets. The list of Zeus's twelve erotic conquests, engraved on the back of Eros' quiver at 7.117–28, is generally believed to have been directly inspired by Pisander;[21] likewise the connection between the wanderings of Cadmus and the battle of Typhon would also appear to derive from the Ἡρωϊκαὶ θεογαμίαι.[22] The extent to which the rest of Nonnus' poem engages with Pisander's mythological narrative must remain, frustratingly, a matter of speculation; it is hoped, however, that by the end of this chapter, a new model of the relationship between Nonnus and Pisander may be cautiously advanced.

Allusive engagement

Before embarking on a book whose subtitle refers to 'allusive engagement' it might be prudent to add a brief note of methodological clarification. The recognition and interpretation of allusions/intertextual references[23] can never pretend to be a scientific activity.[24] It is inevitable, and even desirable, that every reader comes to his or her own conclusions about the meaning of a particular allusion—and

[21] Keydell (1935); Chuvin (1990) 71–7, esp. 75–6. Cf. Vian (1994a) 86: 'The poem [sc. *Dionysiaca*] recounts more or less fully theogamies 2–6 in that catalogue, namely the unions with Europa, Plouto, Danae, Semele, and Aegina. To these can be added a divine theogamy, the union of Zeus with Persephone; from this is born Zagreus, the first manifestation of Dionysus'.

[22] Cf. Olympiodorus [fr.15] in Heitsch (1964) 2.46; Vian (1976) xliv; Chuvin (1990) 75. On further aspects of Cadmus' adventures which may draw inspiration from Pisander see Vian (1976) 26–9; Chuvin (1976) 10–19.

[23] I do not differentiate between allusion and intertextuality (as this is based on the uncertain distinction between authorial intent and the role of the reader).

[24] For a recent stimulating discussion of allusive practice (in a Roman literary context) see Hinds (1998). For further discussion about the practice of allusion see, for example, Ben-Porat (1976); Conte (1986); Conte & Barchiesi (1989); Giangrande (1967); Jacoff & Schnapp (1991); Rosenmeyer (1992) 147–51; Zetzel (1983). On allusive practice in the *Dionysiaca* (and the distinction between different types of allusion) see Harries (1994) 65.

whether indeed it is even there at all. Throughout this book I place emphasis on different levels of allusivity—an allusion may create a specific and very precise resonance or may generate background texture. There is, necessarily, no precise rule to describe my process of selection between 'foreground' and 'background' allusions; rather, I base my understanding of each allusion on the specific *context* in which it is cited. Each allusion must be interrogated with regard to its function/resonance/effect in a particular passage. An isolated reference to the *Iliad* (say) will not necessarily resonate in the same way as a whole series of Iliadic references. The result of this interrogation determines the emphasis which I choose to place upon it. I do not expect that my interpretation of Nonnus' allusive strategies will be uniformly persuasive, but I do hope that it will go some way towards challenging the indifference which still surrounds this most sophisticated of poems.

It is time now to turn to the *Dionysiaca* itself and a detailed investigation of the placement and function of mythological allusions within the narrative of Dionysus. I wish to test the hypothesis that Nonnus conceived his epic not as a random mythological compendium but as a loosely-knit mythological cycle, a cycle which moves from gigantomachic beginnings through to an Odyssean ending, via the story of the Trojan War.[25] A close investigation of the narrative of Dionysus will reveal specific clusters of mythological allusions at certain points in the epic. Most prominent in this respect is the accretion of allusions to the story of the Trojan War in Books 13–40 (the Indian War). But these allusions do not exist in a vacuum; they represent only one important part of a far wider cycle, the cycle of Dionysus. The following analysis is divided into four sections, which represent the different stages of this cycle:

'Epic Beginnings' covers Books 1–12 and moves from the abduction of Europa to the adolescence of the hero Dionysus. In this section it is possible to see significant clusters of allusion to the earliest stages of the cycle of myth. The union of Zeus and Europa looks back to the union between Uranus and Gaia, which stood at the head of the mythological tradition. It is followed by a cosmic strug-

[25] The tablets of Harmonia in Book 12 provide a cosmic history which is to some extent analogous to the mythological 'history' provided by the forty-eight books of the *Dionysiaca*. See pp. 13–14.

gle which alludes to another celebrated event from the beginning of the cycle: the battle of the Titans. Next come the wanderings of Cadmus which clearly parallel the wanderings of Jason and the Argonauts. The story of the birth and early years of Dionysus concludes this section. The description of the hero is strongly reminiscent of the young hero Achilles, and suggests that a parallel stage has been reached in the cycle of Dionysus.

'The Road to War' covers Books 13–24 and moves from Dionysus' initial call to arms to his arrival in India. This section alludes to and parallels the *early* stages of the Trojan Cycle, describing the events which take place before the beginning of Homer's Iliadic narrative. Zeus's decision to start the Indian War, the subsequent assembly of troops and arrival in the territory of the enemy are all clearly modelled on similar stages in the Trojan War.

'The *Indiad*' covers Books 25–40 and describes Dionysus' fight against the chieftain Deriades and his Indian forces. Throughout this section the narrative of the Indian War is very closely modelled on the narrative of Homer's *Iliad.*

'The Road to Olympus' covers Books 40–8 and moves from the end of the Indian War to the apotheosis of Dionysus. These books represent the final, Odyssean stage of the Dionysiac Cycle, an analogue to the homeward journeys of Odysseus and the other Greek heroes after the long years of fighting at Troy.

The Cycle of Dionysus I: Epic Beginnings [1–12]

1. *The abduction of Europa*

ἀλλά, θεά, μαστῆρος ἀλήμονος ἄρχεο Κάδμου.
Σιδονίης ποτὲ ταῦρος ἐπ' ᾐόνος ὑψίκερως Ζεύς
ἱμερόεν μύκημα νόθῳ μυκήσατο λαιμῷ
καὶ γλυκὺν εἶχε μύωπα· μετοχμάζων δὲ γυναῖκα,
κυκλώσας παλάμας περὶ γαστέρα δίζυγι δεσμῷ,
βαιὸς Ἔρως κούφιζε.

(Then come now, Goddess, begin with the long search and travels of Cadmus. Once on the Sidonian beach Zeus as a high-horned bull bellowed an amorous bellow with his changeling throat, and felt a charming thrill; little Eros heaved up a woman, with his two arms encircling her middle.)

[1.45–50]

Although Nonnus calls upon his Muse to begin his story with the wanderings of Cadmus, it is the figure of Europa who dominates the opening of the epic. The story of Europa clearly marks the beginning of the genealogical narrative of Dionysus.[26] At the same time, it is suggestive of a number of different beginnings: literary, mythological and historical. The first two words of Nonnus' narrative—[1.46]: Σιδονίης ποτὲ—combines allusions to two previous versions of the Europa story: Moschus' *Europa* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[27] Moschus' Hellenistic epyllion begins [*Europa* 1]: Εὐρώπῃ ποτὲ Κύπρις ἐπὶ γλυκὺν ἧκεν ὄνειρον (Once upon a time Cypris came to Europa in a sweet deam); whilst Achilles Tatius' Greek novel begins [1.1.1]: Σιδὼν ἐπὶ θαλάσσῃ πόλις (There was a city, Sidon, by the sea). It is surely worthy of comment that Nonnus has opened his narrative with allusions which refer specifically to the *opening* lines of both Moschus and Achilles Tatius.

Perhaps the most famous of all narrations of the Europa story is the one set out at the beginning of Herodotus' *Histories*. It is there that Europa appears as one in a line of prominent abductees, starting with Io and continuing down to Medea and Helen.[28] According to Herodotus it was this series of tit-for-tat abductions which first brought Greece into conflict with other peoples.[29] Nonnus makes no explicit allusion to Herodotus; but it would be another thing entirely to deny that his narrative opening contains an Herodotean resonance. Greek historical consciousness began with that line of abductions; arguably, Nonnus' European opening alludes to, and encompasses that same historical beginning.[30]

The story of Europa is not only about abduction, it is about sexual union.[31] The cycle of Greek mythology begins with a series of such unions/theogamies.[32] Pisander's epic poem, as his title—Ἡρωϊκαὶ

[26] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.1.1.

[27] See Vian (1976) *ad loc.*; Whitby (1994) 101–5 on Moschus; Gigli (1978) 433 on Achilles Tatius.

[28] Hdt. 1.1–2.

[29] This final theft was of course destined to precipitate the Trojan War. Abducted maidens feature prominently at the beginning of the *Iliad*, in the form of Briseis and Chryseis.

[30] Hopkinson (1994b) 34 n. 29 seems to be the first to bring Herodotus into the Nonnian equation, though he considers as 'fanciful' the possibility of any conscious reference to Herodotus at this point.

[31] See 1.344–55.

[32] See Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1; Hes. *Theog.* 132ff.

θεογαμίαι (Heroic Marriages of the Gods)—suggests, was concerned with marriages between gods and mortals. In so far as the evidence allows us to speculate, his own epic narrative opened with an act of union: the marriage of Zeus and Hera. In the case of both Pisander and the mythological cycle, an opening act of union was followed closely by a cosmic struggle. Apollodorus' account of Greek mythology opens (in close paraphrase of Hesiod's *Theogony*) with the union of Uranus and Gaia,[33] and goes on to describe its disturbing consequences: the birth of monstrous Titan offspring who inaugurate a struggle for control of Olympus. Similarly, in Pisander's narration, a divine marriage (between Zeus and Hera) is followed by a cosmic struggle (Gigantomachy). This pattern maps suggestively onto the opening two books of the *Dionysiaca*: after the union of Zeus and Europa, there appears the monster Typhon who vies for control of the cosmos.

2. *Typhonomachy*

It is during his search that Cadmus arrives at the Arimean cave in Cilicia and finds the world in uproar and the gods in flight from Olympus. This has been the responsibility of Typhon, the monster who has, quite literally, stolen Zeus's thunder (from the cave where it was hidden), and placed it in a cubby-hole of his own. The polycephalous monster launches a take-over bid for control of Olympus, a battle that will rage violently through the first two books of the *Dionysiaca*. The juxtaposition of Typhon's insurrection and the abduction of Europa invites the suggestion of a causal connection. In fact, Nonnus tells us that the thunderbolt was stolen whilst Zeus was engaged in the seduction of another girl entirely.[34] However, the

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[33] Hints of forced conjugation are already present in the story of Uranus and Gaia: see especially Gaia's efforts to enlist the support of her children against Uranus at Hes. *Theog.* 164–6.

[34] See 1.145–7: καὶ γὰρ ἐς εὐνὴν / Πλουτοῦς Ζεὺς Κρονίδης πεφορημένος, ὄφρα φυτεύσῃ / Τάνταλον . . . (For Zeus Cronides had hurried to Plouto's bed, to beget Tantalus); cf. Braden (1974) 861 'the passage is almost a showcase of Nonnos' narrative chaos. That explanatory "for" (*gar*) is more irritating than satisfying, if we consider how much tidier it would have been to have the rape of Europa as the cause of Zeus' disarmament; indeed, the arrows in Cupid's quiver in Book VII have Plouto coming *after* Europa—the most bothersome of possible arrangements'. Bothersome or otherwise, Europa and Typhon sit next to each other, like two scenes on a tapestry (cf. Braden (1974) 863; Vian (1976) 90); and, regardless of the 'real' explanation, their proximity invites us to draw certain narrative conclusions.

sense of a connection between the two events remains; and it is only after he has completed his seduction of Europa that Zeus sets about restoring order and defeating Typhon.

Zeus's plan of action falls into two clear parts, marked by the division between Books 1 and 2. In the first part Zeus enlists the help of Cadmus in order to secure the return of his thunderbolts: disguised as a shepherd, Cadmus uses pastoral music to beguile Typhon's wits and set him off his guard. Having recovered his thunderbolts, Zeus enters into a second stage of direct combat with the monster, and at length succeeds in burying him under the island of Sicily.

It ought to be mentioned right from the start that, from an orthodox mythological perspective, Typhon has no logical part to play in the story of Dionysus: he belongs to a much earlier moment in the cycle of myth, long before the birth of Cadmus.[35] The bold chronological revision which unites Cadmus and Typhon in this way was probably not a Nonnian innovation; it was more likely to have been the responsibility of Pisander of Laranda.[36] Whoever was ultimately responsible for the adaptation, the chronological shift has significant implications for Nonnus' narrative. Cadmus' new position in the mythological cycle gives him increased prominence and stature: the hero is now able to play a pivotal role in restoring order to the cosmos and Zeus to his throne on Olympus.[37]

As it is described by Hesiod, the struggle of Typhon forms properly only the second stage of larger battle: the Titanomachy.[38] From a structural point of view Nonnus' Typhonomachy, falling as it does into two clear halves, looks like an attempt to replicate the bipartite arrangement in Hesiod's account of the battle of the Titans. The actions of Nonnus' Typhon within this bipartate structure also appear to re-enact scenes from an earlier stage in the Titanomachy. The

[35] See, for example, Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.6.3 (Typhon); *Bibl.* 3.1.1 (Cadmus).

[36] See pp. 30–1.

[37] Nonnus interjects other mythical allusions which help to locate us within the early stages of the mythological cycle. Typhon reminds us of the story of Prometheus' punishment [2.297–300]. Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, finds his way into the Dionysiac narrative at 6.367–70; at 7.58–66 reference is made to Pandora, another participant in the Prometheus story.

[38] Hes. *Theog.* 820ff. Cf. Schmiel (1992). Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.6.3 differs from Hesiod at this point, placing the Typhonomachy *after* the later Gigantomachy. 'In later literature,' writes West (1966) 337–8, 'the Titanomachy is frequently and thoroughly confused with the Gigantomachy'.

battle of the Titans is precipitated by the goddess Gaia who directs her son Cronus to cut off his father's godhood[39]—an act that will result in the liberation of the Titans. The Typhonomachy is similarly precipitated by Gaia (Aroure) who directs *her* son Typhon to steal the weapons of Zeus [1.154–6]: καὶ παλάμας τανύσας ὑπὸ νεύματι μητρὸς Ἀρούρης / ὅπλα Διὸς νιφόεντα Κίλιξ ἔκλεψε Τυφωεύς / ὅπλα πυρός (Then at a nod from his mother, the Earth, Cilician Typhoeus stretched out his hands, and stole the snowy tools of Zeus, the tools of fire).[40] The theft of Zeus's ὅπλα seems ironically to re-enact the earlier theft of Uranus' own erotic weaponry.[41]

The opening books of the *Dionysiaca* thus represent a grand cosmic beginning for Nonnus' narrative. Through the strategic placement of Europa at the beginning of his epic, Nonnus manages to encompass the beginnings of mythology, history and literature. The presence of Typhon in these early books implicates the story of Cadmus into one of the earliest and most important stories in the whole of Greek mythology: the battle of the Titans.[42] At the same time, the poet's attempt to aggrandize his epic, to develop and sustain its cosmic dimensions, can be seen as a direct response to the influence of Homer. While the Typhonomachy is still in full swing, Nonnus steps forward to add his own explicit guide to the way we as readers should approach the narrative before us:

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[39] See Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.4; Hes. *Theog.* 164–82.

[40] In the closing stages of Zeus's battle with Typhon explicit reference is made to the earlier phase of Titanic fighting. Zeus's vaunting response to the defeated Typhon includes a conscious reminiscence of the first stage of the battle [2.565–7]: καλὸν ἀοσσητῆρα γέρων Κρόνος εὗρε, Τυφωεῦ· / χθὼν μόγις υἷα λόχευσε μετὰ κλόνον Ἰαπετοῖο· / ἡδὺς ὁ Τιτήνων τιμήορος (A fine ally has old Cronus found in you Typhoeus! Earth could scarcely bring forth a son after the fighting of Iapetus! A jolly champion of Titans).

[41] Zeus loses his thunderbolts at the precise moment that he is loosing his erotic bolts, during his conquest of both Europa and Plouto. For the double-entendre in ὅπλα see LSJ ὅπλον, τό 5. *membrum virile.* The story of the theft of Zeus's sinews—νεῦρα—to which Nonnus vaguely refers at 1.510–16 appears to offer an alternative version of the theft of the thunderbolts. See Hansen (1995) 13–20; Vian (1976) 22–9; cf. Fontenrose (1959) 74–5. Νεῦρα, like ὅπλα, are capable of sustaining an erotic meaning; see LSJ νεῦρον, τό 5. *penis.*

[42] Cf. Hardie (1986) esp. 85–156 where it is argued that gigantomachic imagery gives a universalizing significance to Virgil's epic.

οὐ βοέης ἀγέλης χάριν, οὐ περὶ ποίμνης
ἦεν ἀγών, οὐ νεῖκος ἔην ἐπὶ κάλλεϊ νύμφης,
οὐ κλόνος ἀμφὶ πόληος ὀλίζονος· ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ
<αἰθέρος> ἵστατο δῆρις, ἔην δ' ἐνὶ γούνασι Νίκης
σκῆπτρα Διὸς καὶ θῶκος ἀέθλια δηιοτῆτος.

(No herds of cattle were the cause of that struggle, no flocks of sheep, this was no quarrel for a beautiful woman, no fray for a petty town: heaven itself was the stake in the fight, the sceptre and throne of Zeus lay on the knees of Victory as the prize of combat.)

[2.359–63][43]

The attempt to claim primacy, to stress the importance of one's own endeavour is reminiscent of the historiographical traditions of Herodotus and Thucydides.[44] However, the direct source for this scene is *Iliad* 22, where Homer comments on the flight of Hector [*Il.* 22.159–61]: ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήϊον, οὐδὲ βοείην / ἀρνύσθην, ἅ τε ποσσὶν ἀέθλια γίγνεται ἀνδρῶν, / ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο (For it was not for beast of sacrifice or for bull's hide that they strove, such as are men's prizes for swiftness of foot, but it was for the life of horse-taming Hector that they ran).[45] Nonnus here vaunts the superiority of his own narrative over that of Homer, by wittily recalling a section of the *Iliad* in order to cap it. As shall be seen time and again, the *Dionysiaca* strives for a greater effect, aims for a wider view, than that produced by Homer and other epic poets.[46]

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[43] Cf. 25.23–7.

[44] Thuc. 1.1: Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων . . . ἀρξάμενος εὐθὺς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων (Thucydides the Athenian wrote about the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians . . .; he began as soon as it started, in the expectation that it would be a great war and possibly even the most remarkable of wars to date); see also Thuc. 1.10, where Thucydides downsizes the scale of the Trojan War.

[45] Cf. 10.333–5.

[46] It is not just Homer who is targeted here, but the whole Trojan Cycle. The mention of livestock recalls the theft of the cattle of Aeneas during the early stages of the war. Cf. Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 80 (*EGF* p. 32): κἄπειτα ἀπελαύνει τὰς Αἰνείου βοῦς (Then he drives away the cattle of Aeneas); Apollod. *Epit.* 3.33. Nonnus' allusion to the νεῖκος . . . ἐπὶ κάλλεϊ νύμφης [2.360] contains a neat imprecision. It seems most natural to take this as a reference to Helen, the archetypal 'beautiful bride'. Yet the 'dispute' about beauty takes us back to the stage before the abduction of Helen, to the 'Judgement of Paris'; cf. Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 7–8 (*EGF* p. 31): παραγενομένη δὲ Ἔρις εὐωχουμένων τῶν θεῶν ἐν τοῖς Πηλέως γάμοις, νεῖκος περὶ κάλλους ἀνίστησιν Ἀθηνᾷ, Ἥρᾳ καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ (While the gods were celebrating the marriage of Peleus, Eris turned up and stirred up an argument about beauty between Athena, Hera and Aphrodite).

3. *Wanderings of Cadmus*

By the end of Book 2 order is restored to the cosmos. Zeus rewards Cadmus by promising him the hand of Harmonia in marriage, and a kingdom to rule over; at the same time, he persuades him to give up his search for Europa (who has settled in Crete). Cadmus is now sent off in the direction of Delphi, where he is to receive further instruction from the oracle of Apollo. His first port of call is the island of Samothrace, the home of Harmonia. Cadmus wins the girl over to his side, and together they sail for mainland Greece and make their way to Delphi. Ordered to follow the path of a wandering cow, they come at last to the place that is destined to be their home. Cadmus duly sets about founding the city of Thebes and is able, finally, to celebrate his marriage to Harmonia.

a) Argonautica

Cadmus' journey to Thebes contains a number of clear allusions to another epic voyager: Jason, allusions which take the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius as their direct intertext. At the beginning of Book 3 we find Cadmus at the start of the long journey, which is destined to take him to Thebes [3.37]: Τρώιον ὑγρονόμοιο διασχίζων πόρον Ἕλλης (cleaving the Trojan channel of water-ranging Helle).[47] At this very moment Cadmus is blown off course and makes landfall on the island of Samothrace, proceeding under the power of oars to a safe anchorage [3.35–51]. In general terms, this recollects the arrival of the Argonauts at Colchis [Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.1242–85]. Upon their arrival, Cadmus' crew eat a meal, spread out their beds along the shore and go to sleep [3.51–4]: ἐπ᾽ αἰγιαλοῖο δὲ ναῦται / ἀστορέας ψαμάθοισιν ἐπετρέψαντο χαμεύνας / ἑσπερίην μετὰ δαῖτα· βαρυνομένοισι δὲ φωτῶν / ὄμμασιν ἄψοφον ἴχνος ἐπήγαγεν Ὕπνος ἀλήτης (On the shore after the evening meal, the men spread their pallets on the sand without bedding; the poor fellows' eyes were heavy, and

[47] Compare Ino's declamation at 10.97–103: Νεφέλη γὰρ Ἐριννύας εἰς ἐμὲ πέμπει, / ὄφρα θάνω κατὰ πόντον, ὅπῃ πέσε παρθένος Ἕλλη. / ἔκλυον ἠερόθεν πεφορημένον εἰς χθόνα Κόλχων / ἅρπαγος ἀρνειοῖο μετήορον ἡνιοχῆα / Φρίξον ἔτι ζώειν μετανάστιον· αἴθε καὶ αὐτός / χρυσοπόκου κριοῖο μετάρσιον οἶμον ὁδεύοι / υἱὸς ἐμὸς λιπόπατρις ἀλυσκάζων Μελικέρτης (It is Nephele sends the Erinyes after me, that I may die in this sea where maiden Helle fell. I have heard that Phrixus was carried through the air to the Colchian country, guiding aloft the ram who took him off, and he still lives in a distant land. O that my son Melicertes too might escape to another country, and travel the high path of the goldfleece ram!).

wandering sleep came on them with silent step). This scene clearly recalls *Argon.* 1.453–7 where the Argonauts settle down upon the shore on the night before their departure.[48]

The island of Samothrace made up part of the itinerary for the outward voyage of the Argonauts, as described by Apollonius at *Argon.* 1.915–21. Jason and his fellow sailors arrive on the island in order to be initiated into the Samothracian mystery rites. Teasingly, Apollonius allows us to learn nothing more about their initiation and sojourn on Samothrace [*Argon.* 1.919–21]: τῶν μὲν ἔτ' οὐ προτέρω μυθήσομαι· ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴ / νῆσος ὁμῶς κεχάροιτο καὶ οἳ λάχον ὄργια κεῖνα / δαίμονες ἐνναέται, τὰ μὲν οὐ θέμις ἄμμιν ἀείδειν (I will make no further mention of these things; but bid farewell to the island itself and the indigenous deities, to whom belong those mysteries, which it is not lawful for me to sing). Nonnus' reworking of the *Argonautica* pointedly provides us with the narrative which Apollonius had refused to tell: the story of 'Jason' on Samothrace. In reality, however, Nonnus is no more forthcoming than Apollonius about the island's mystery rites.[49]

In the morning Cadmus wakes up and sets off towards the city. On his way to the royal palace he meets a talking crow who chides him for his slow progress: he ought to forget about Europa and concentrate on Harmonia [3.114]. The crow rounds off her speech in the following manner [3.119–22]: ἐπαινήσεις δὲ κορώνην, / καὶ γαμίην καλέσεις με θεοπρόπον ὄρνιν Ἐρώτων.—/ ἤλιτον· ἀλλά με Κύπρις ἐπέπνεεν· ἐκ Παφίης γάρ / θεσπίζω σέο λέκτρα, καὶ εἰ πέλον ὄρνις Ἀθήνης (You will thank the crow and you will call me the bird of marriage, the prophet of the Loves! No, I am wrong, Cypris inspired me; the Paphian made me foretell your nuptials, although I am Athena's bird). Here Nonnus has adapted the scene in *Argonautica* 3, when Jason and the seer Mopsus set out for the temple in order to liaise with Medea.[50] In Apollonius' version the bird chides Mopsus for not having the foresight to leave Jason alone with Medea [*Argon.* 3.932–5].

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[48] *Argon.* 1.453–5: . . . τῆμος ἄρ' ἤδη πάντες ἐπὶ ψαμάθοισι βαθεῖαν / φυλλάδα χευάμενοι πολιοῦ πρόπαρ αἰγιαλοῖο / κέκλινθ' ἑξείης (. . . at that hour all the heroes spread leaves thickly over the sand and lay down in rows along the grey shore). See Chuvin (1976) *ad loc.*

[49] See 3.43–4, 61–76; cf. Chuvin (1976) 14: 'Cadmos ne s'y fait pas initier, à la différence des Argonautes'.

[50] The loquacious crow can be traced back to Callimachus' *Hecale.* See Hollis (1990) *passim*; 232: 'the device of the talking bird set quite a fashion in later poetry'.

Her speech concludes [*Argon.* 3.936–7]: οὔτε σε Κύπρις,/ οὔτ' ἀγανοὶ φιλέοντες ἐπιπνείουσιν[51] Ἔρωτες (On you neither Cypris nor the gentle Loves breathe inspiration in their kindness). This has been reworked by Nonnus to form an appropriate conclusion to his own bird speech, as quoted above.[52]

Allusions to the *Argonautica* invite us to read Cadmus as a proto-Jason. The parallels between the two heroes are certainly clear: Jason has been sent off on a mission to bring back the golden fleece, following the path of the flying ram; Cadmus has been sent on a mission to bring back Europa, following the path of the divine bull.[53] We may also observe how Jason's ambiguous stature,[54] and ill-fated end, sustain analogy with Cadmus' own ambivalent lot. Cadmus' reward of marriage to Harmonia is destined to be soured by the family tragedy that awaits him: Semele is destroyed by a thunderbolt, Agave murders her own child, Ino goes mad, and Autonoe's son Actaeon is torn to pieces by his hounds. Polydorus, meanwhile, the son in whom Cadmus rejoices, is destined to be ousted from the throne of Thebes by Pentheus [5.207–10]. And after all this suffering, Cadmus and Harmonia can look forward only to the prospect of metamorphosis into snakes [5.123–5].[55]

Just as Cadmus plays the part of Jason, so Harmonia fits into the role of Medea. The whole scene of Harmonia's departure at 4.177–211 is clearly adapted from 'the departure of Medea' at *Argon.* 4.26–65.[56]

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[51] Compare Callim. *Hec.* fr. 74.9 Hollis: ὡς Θριαὶ τὴν γρῆϋν ἐπιπνείουσι κορώνην (how the Thriae inspire the old crow).

[52] The main difference between the two versions is that whilst Jason is accompanied by Mopsus, Cadmus travels alone—and so the bird speaks directly to him (as noted by Chamberlayne (1916) 63). Note also an intriguing change of detail: in Apollonius the bird sits on a poplar tree—[*Argon.* 3.928]: αἴγειρος—whilst in Nonnus an olive tree is chosen [3.98]. The choice of olive clearly has to do with the last phrase uttered by Nonnus' crow [3.122]: καὶ εἰ πέλον ὄρνις Ἀθήνης. Whether this alludes in any way to Callimachus' narration of 'Athena and the crow' is uncertain; Hollis (1990) does not speculate.

[53] 3.316–9: καί με κασιγνήτοισιν ὁμήλυδα πέμψεν Ἀγήνωρ / σύγγονον ἰχνεύοντα καὶ ἄγριον ἅρπαγα νύμφης, / ταῦρον ἀκυμάντοιο νόθον πλωτῆρα θαλάσσης, / ἧς χάριν ἀστήρικτος ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδε βαίνω (And Agenor sent me along with my brothers to track our sister and the girl's wild robber, that bull the bastard voyager over a waveless sea. That is why my random journeying brings me here).

[54] See, for example, Hunter (1988).

[55] See 46.364–7.

[56] Chuvin (1976) 43–4. Chuvin neglects to comment on the reference to Hecate in 4.185. As he himself commented in his introduction to Book 3 (1976) 12: 'La grande déesse de Samothrace est Hécate'. Whilst fitting in perfectly with the traditions of the island, the reference to Hecate also points towards literary allusion:

In the course of her long and emotional farewell the young woman embraces the fittings and furnishings of her bedroom [4.203–5]: μυρομένη δέ / τυκτὰ πολυγλυφέων ἠσπάσσατο κύκλα θυράων / ἄπνοα καὶ κλιντῆρα καὶ ἕρκεα παρθενεῶνος (She caressed, lamenting, the rows of the lifeless carven doors all round, her bed and the walls of the maiden chamber). This bizarre farewell takes its inspiration from *Argon.* 4.26–9: κύσσε δ' ἑόν τε λέχος καὶ δικλίδας ἀμφοτέρωθεν / σταθμούς, καὶ τοίχων ἐπαφήσατο, χερσί τε μακρόν / ῥηξαμένην πλόκαμον, θαλάμῳ μνημήια μητρὶ / κάλλιπε παρθενίης, ἀδινῇ δ' ὀλοφύρατο φωνῇ (then she kissed her bed and the folding door on both sides, and stroked the walls, and tearing away in her hands a long tress of hair, she left it in the chamber for her mother, a memorial of her maidenhood, and thus lamented with passionate voice).

Once Harmonia is won over to Cadmus' side by divine cunning, she exhibits a passion of truly Medean proportions [4.197–8]: τοῖα νοοπλανέεσσι μεληδόσιν ἤπυε κούρη / ἄσχετος ἱμερόεντι δαϊζομένη νόον οἴστρῳ (Such words the girl uttered in mind-wandering plaints, and could not be restrained, her mind ravaged with the sting of desire). But unlike Medea, who stole away illicitly under cover of night, Harmonia has had time to bid farewell to her family [4.200–2]: Ἠλέκτρης κύσε χεῖρα καὶ ὄμματα καὶ πόδας ἄκρους / καὶ κεφαλὴν καὶ στέρνα, καὶ Ἠμαθίωνος ὀπωπὴν / χείλεσιν αἰδομένοισι, κασιγνήτου περ ἐόντος (She kissed Electra's hand and eyes, her feet and head and breast, and Emathion's eyes with shamefast lips although he was her brother). Behind this fond farewell between one sibling and another there lurks a sinister reminiscence of Medea. We recall that Medea was implicated in the death of her brother Apsyrtus.[57] The αἰδώς which Harmonia feels in kissing her brother invites reflection upon the lack of shame exhibited by Medea in the *killing* of hers.

The second stage of Cadmus' journey, which will take him to Thebes via the oracle at Delphi, sustains and develops Argonautic allusion. His journey to the Greek mainland and on to his future home, parallels that of Jason who leaves Colchis bound for his home

according to Apollonius, Medea was the priestess of this same goddess [*Argon.* 3.251–2]: Ἑκάτης δὲ πανήμερος ἀμφεπονεῖτο / νηόν, ἐπεί ῥα θεᾶς αὐτὴ πέλεν ἀρήτειρα (All day long she was busied in Hecate's temple, since she herself was the priestess of the goddess).

[57] *Argon.* 4.465–7: αἶψα δὲ κούρη / ἔμπαλιν ὄμματ' ἔνεικε, καλυψαμένη ὀθόνῃσιν, / μὴ φόνον ἀθρήσειε κασιγνήτοιο τυπέντος (And quickly the maiden turned her eyes aside and covered them with her veil so that she might not see the blood of her brother when he was struck).

in Greece. Both heroes travel with their brides-to-be, intending to marry them when they reach their homes in Greece:[58] Cadmus marries Harmonia only after he has founded Thebes [5.88–9]: Ἀονίων δὲ θύγατρες ἀνεκρούσαντο χορείαις / Ἁρμονίης ὑμέναιον (The daughters of the Aonians struck up Harmonia's marriage hymn with dances); Jason's plan to marry at home, however, is thwarted by circumstance, and the fleeing couple are forced instead to marry at the court of Alcinous [*Argon.* 4.1161–4].

A final prominent locus of Argonautic allusion centers upon the foundation of Thebes by Cadmus. Before he can achieve his goal and found the city, Cadmus must fight off the murderous advances of the local serpent [4.356ff.]. The presence of this snake binds together the narratives of both Cadmus and Jason. The mythological connection is made explicit by Apollonius during the trial of Jason at *Argon.* 3.1176–80: πόρε δέ σφιν ἰοῦσιν / κρείων Αἰήτης χαλεποὺς ἐς ἄεθλον ὀδόντας / Ἀονίοιο δράκοντος, ὃν Ὠγυγίῃ ἐνὶ Θήβῃ / Κάδμος, ὅτ' Εὐρώπην διζήμενος εἰσαφίκανεν, / πέφνεν. . . (But when they came, King Aietes gave them for the contest the terrible teeth of the Aonian dragon which Cadmus killed in Ogygian Thebes, when he came in search of Europa . . .). Both heroes are forced to undergo the same trial. Once the serpent is dead, Athena tells Cadmus that he must sow the snake's teeth and reap a crop of earthborn men:

> ἀλλὰ καταφθιμένοιο λαβὼν δασπλῆτας ὀδόντας
> θηρὸς ἐχιδνήεντι περισπείρας Χθόνα καρπῷ
> κεῖρε Γιγαντείης ὀφιώδεα λήια Χάρμης·
> Γηγενέων δὲ φάλαγγας ἐνὶ ξύνωσον ὀλέθρῳ
> πέντε λιπὼν ζώοντας· ἐπεσσομένῃσι δὲ Θήβαις
> Σπαρτῶν ἀγλαόκαρπος ἀνασταχύοιτο γενέθλη.

> (But when he is killed, take the creature's horrible teeth, sow the ground all about with the snaky corn, reap the viperous harvest of warrior giants, join the battalions of the earthborn in one common destruction, and leave only five living: let the crop of the Sown sprout up to glorious fruitage for Thebes that shall be.)
>
> [4.400–5]

[58] Compare another instance of delayed marriage after wanderings: when Paris abducts Helen, Hera stirs up a storm which carries them to Sidon. It is only *after* his return to Troy that Alexander/Paris celebrates his marriage with Helen [Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 25–7 (*EGF* p. 31)]: χειμῶνα δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐφίστησιν Ἥρα. καὶ προσενεχθεὶς Σιδῶνι ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος αἱρεῖ τὴν πόλιν. καὶ ἀποπλεύσας εἰς Ἴλιον γάμους τῆς Ἑλένης ἐπετέλεσεν (Hera set a storm upon them. Driven to Sidon Alexander/Paris captured the city; then he sailed to Troy and married Helen).

In the *Argonautica* it is Medea, not Athena, who gives advice to the hero:

> αὐτίκ᾽ ἐπὴν κρατεροὺς ζεύξῃς βόας, ὦκα δὲ πᾶσαν
> χερσὶ καὶ ἠνορέῃ στυφελὴν διὰ νειὸν ἀρόσσῃς,
> οἱ δ᾽ ἤδη κατὰ ὦλκας ἀνασταχύωσι Γίγαντες
> σπειρομένων ὄφιος δνοφερὴν ἐπὶ βῶλον ὀδόντων,
> αἴ κεν ὀρινομένους πολέας νειοῖο δοκεύσῃς,
> λάθρῃ λᾶαν ἄφες στιβαρώτερον.

> (As soon as you have yoked the powerful bulls, and with your might and your prowess have ploughed the whole hard field, and now along the furrows the Giants are springing up, when the dragon's teeth are sown into the dark earth, if you see them rising in throngs from the fallow, cast unseen among them a heavy stone.)
>
> [*Argon.* 3.1052–7]

Nonnus has clearly exploited Apollonius' narration of the trials of Jason in his own reconstruction of the trials of Cadmus throughout Books 3–5. Close parallels between the two narratives, which culminate in the sowing of the serpent's teeth, adds allusive texture to Nonnus' story. He has used Apollonian allusion to construct his own *Argonautica*, which represents one small, yet important, part in the larger narrative of Dionysus. It is especially apposite that Nonnus' *Argonautica* should follow on directly after his account of the Titanomachy, since this is precisely the same chronological arrangement as that adopted by Apollodorus.[59] We are beginning to see how the specific story of Dionysus also gestures towards a wider story, using allusion to renarrate moments from the beginning of the mythological cycle: Cadmus' battle against Typhon and his journey to Thebes also embraces the battle of the Titans and the voyage of the Argonauts.

b) Odyssey

The journey of Cadmus contains one further strand of allusive complexity which has not yet been described, but which now needs to be unravelled. Cadmus' experiences on the island of Samothrace in Book 3 not only reflect those of Jason but also those of Odysseus, in particular the experiences of Odysseus amongst the Phaeacians [*Odyssey* 5–13].[60]

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[59] Apollodorus follows his account of the Titanomachy with a summary of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius [*Bibl.* 1.9.16ff.].

[60] See Chuvin (1976) 4 and notes *ad loc.* Harries (1994) 64 reads an Odyssean structure into the early books of the *Dionysiaca*: 'the poem opens with a search . . .'.

Nonnus has played on Cadmus' qualities as a wanderer from his earliest appearance in Book 1 [1.45]: ἀλλά, θεά, μαστῆρος ἀλήμονος ἄρχεο Κάδμου (Then come now, Goddess, begin with the long search and travels of Cadmus). As such, Cadmus invites a natural comparison with Odysseus, the ultimate epic wanderer.[61] When Cadmus makes his way from the shore of Samothrace to the city, he meets Peitho disguised as a hard-pressed servant—[3.86]: οἷα γυνὴ ταλαεργὸς—and carrying a pitcher under her arm—[3.87]: ἐκούφισε κάλπιν ἀγοστῷ; Peitho covers Cadmus in a cloud of mist and then leads him, unseen, to the palace of the King Emathion [3.95–6]. This prompts a clear reminiscence of Athena's appearance before Odysseus on his inward journey to the city [*Od.* 7.19–20]: . . ἔνθα οἱ ἀντεβόλησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη / παρθενικῇ εἰκυῖα νεήνιδι, κάλπιν ἐχούσῃ (Then the goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, met him in the guise of a young maiden carrying a pitcher); Athena next covers the hero with mist and guides him citywards [*Od.* 7.37ff.].

The similarity of the narratives of Cadmus and Odysseus at this point invites consideration of the differences between them, most obviously regarding the hero's arrival from the sea. Unlike Odysseus, Cadmus is not shipwrecked, nor does he meet his 'Nausicaa' upon the sea-shore. Nevertheless, Nonnus is keen to show his readers that he has not forgotten the Homeric setting. On his way to the city, Cadmus' journey takes him past the women's washing-pits [3.90–3]: καὶ σχεδὸν ἄστεος ἦεν, ὅθι γλαφυροῖς ἐνὶ βόθροις / συμπλεκέων ῥυπόωσαν ἐπασσυτέρων στίχα πέπλων / ποσσὶ πολυσκάρθμοισιν ἐπιστείβουσι γυναῖκες, / ποσσὶν ὁμοζήλοισι (He was now close by the city, where in hollow pits bundles on bundles of soiled clothing are trodden by the women's bounding feet, trodden in emulation). This detail recalls the washing expedition of Nausicaa at *Od.* 6.85–95,[62] most notably *Od.* 6.92–4: στεῖβον δ' ἐν βόθροισι θοῶς, ἔριδα προφέρουσαι. / αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πλῦνάν τε κάθηράν τε ῥύπα πάντα . . . (They trampled on them in the trenches, busily vying each with one another. Now when they had washed the garments, and had cleansed them of all stains . . .). As can be seen, Homer's ἔριδα προφέρουσαι is recalled by Nonnus

This presents the intriguing picture of Cadmus as Telemachus. Just as Telemachus is an immature version of his father, so Cadmus may be seen as an imperfect version of his grandson.

[61] Compare Cadmus' deception of Typhon with Odysseus' deception of the cyclops Polyphemus.

[62] As noted by Chuvin (1976) 137.

in the phrase ποσσὶν ὁμοζήλοισι—the women are not the only competitors in this scene: Nonnus is himself engaged in a competition with Homer.[63] Poetic rivalry may explain the change which Nonnus makes to the original account: from Athena's closing remark to Nausicaa, we learn that the washing places are *a long way* from the city [*Od.* 6.40]: πολλὸν γὰρ ἀπὸ πλυνοί εἰσι πόληος; in Nonnus' version this topographic detail is altered, one might almost say 'corrected', to reveal that the washing pits are located *close by* the city [3.90]: καὶ σχεδὸν ἄστεος ἦεν.[64]

Cadmus and Odysseus now arrive at their respective palatial destinations. Peitho informs Cadmus that they have reached the palace with a silent gesture [3.126–9]: τανυσσαμένη τότε Κάδμῳ / δάκτυλον ἀντιτύποιο νοήμονα μάρτυρα φωνῆς / σιγαλέῳ κήρυκι δόμον σημήνατο Πειθὼ / ποικίλον ἀστράπτοντα (Peitho pointed a finger to indicate the corresponding words in her mind, and by this voiceless herald showed the house of shining artistry). By contrast, Athena explicitly comments on the fact to Odysseus [*Od.* 7.48–9]: οὗτος δή τοι, ξεῖνε πάτερ, δόμος, ὅν με κελεύεις / πεφραδέμεν (Here, father stranger, is the house which you asked me to show you). Left on his own, Cadmus gazes at the palace [3.131]: καὶ δόμον ἐσκοπίαζεν ἀλήμονι Κάδμος ὀπωπῇ (then Cadmus surveyed the house with roving gaze); so Odysseus at *Od.* 7.82–3: πολλὰ δέ οἱ κῆρ / ὅρμαιν' ἱσταμένῳ, πρὶν χάλκεον οὐδὸν ἱκέσθαι (There he stood, and his heart pondered much before he reached the threshold of bronze). Homer's threshold has been directly transplanted into Nonnus' version [3.134–5]: νεοσταθέος δὲ μελάθρου / χάλκεος οὐδὸς ἔην εὐήλατος (The whole palace was new. A bronze threshold well-wrought was before it). Emphasis on the recent construction of the palace is, however, Nonnus' own.[65]

While still paused on the threshold, it would be appropriate to consider a further connection between the two courts. At the palace of Alcinous Odysseus is entertained by the singer Demodocus. The

[63] Dr P. R. Hardie suggests that Nonnus may be punning on metrical 'feet' at this point.

[64] *Contra* Chamberlayne (1916) 63: '... disconnected motives from the Odyssey [are] dragged in for nothing'.

[65] The novelty of the palace evokes several resonances: on the one hand, the palace is 'new' because it belongs to such an early period of Greek mythology, existing long before the palace of Alcinous; on the other hand, the palace is 'new' in the sense of 'modern'—cupolas and mosaics owe more to Byzantium than Homer; see Chamberlayne (1916) 63–5; Keydell (1955).

first of his songs concerns the illicit affair between Aphrodite and Ares [*Od.* 8.266–9]: αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀείδειν / ἀμφ' Ἄρεος φιλότητος ἐυστεφάνου τ' Ἀφροδίτης, / ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μίγησαν ἐν Ἡφαίστοιο δόμοισι / λάθρῃ (Next the minstrel struck the cords in prelude to his sweet lay and sang of the love of Ares and fair-crowned Aphrodite, how first they lay together in the house of Hephaestus secretly). The love-child of this relationship was, of course, Harmonia [3.376–7]: ἣν Ἀφροδίτης / λαθριδίῃ φιλότητι γαμοκλόπος ἤροσεν Ἄρης (the girl whom wife-stealing Ares begat in secret love with Aphrodite). If the court of Alcinous was home to the song about the affair between Ares and Aphrodite, it is a pleasing irony that Nonnus' 'court of Alcinous' should be home to the love-child of that same affair. Nonnus is able to cap Homer by supplying as narrative reality what Homer could only supply as a mythical lay.

Amongst the wonders of the Nonnian palace are model dogs that bark and fawn upon Cadmus as he passes through the gate [3.177–9]: παραστείχοντι δὲ Κάδμῳ / μιμηλῆς ἀπέπεμπε βοῆς ξεινοσσόον ἠχώ, / ποιητῆς δ' ἐλέλιζε φιλοστόργου τύπον οὐρῆς (As Cadmus passed, Echo sent forth a sound like a welcome for a guest, and wagged the friendly shape of an artificial tail). These mimic canines are not original to the *Dionysiaca*, they are themselves imitations of the dogs that guard the palace of Alcinous [*Od.* 7.91]: χρύσειοι δ' ἑκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν (On either side of the door there stood gold and silver dogs). Homer does not describe the movement and tail-wagging of Alcinous' animals; but once again the detail is not Nonnus' own. The poet appears to have taken this detail from another Homeric canine tableau, the 'dog at the gate' in *Odyssey* 17, where the decrepit Argus recognizes his former master [*Od.* 17.300–2]: ἔνθα κύων κεῖτ' Ἄργος, ἐνίπλειος κυνοραιστέων. / δὴ τότε γ', ὡς ἐνόησεν Ὀδυσσέα ἐγγὺς ἐόντα, / οὐρῇ μέν ῥ' ὅ γ' ἔσηνε καὶ οὔατα κάββαλεν ἄμφω (There lay the dog Argus, full of dog ticks. But now, when he became aware that Odysseus was near, he wagged his tail and dropped both ears). Nonnus has blended together the two Homeric allusions in such a way that the palace dogs are made to welcome Cadmus because they recognize him as 'Odysseus'.

Cadmus' reception, once inside the palace, is again clearly modelled on the reception of Odysseus. A banquet is prepared in honour of the hero. Unlike Odysseus, who talks explicitly about the need for food even in sorrow—[*Od.* 7.215] ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν δορπῆσαι ἐάσατε κηδόμενόν περ (But as for me, let me now eat, despite my grief)—

Cadmus is too upset to eat [3.231]: καὶ μόλις εἰλαπίναζε (he hardly touched the banquet). When the banquet is over, Electra questions Cadmus [3.243ff.]; just as Arete questioned Odysseus [*Od.* 7.236ff.]. In response to the interrogation, Odysseus begins the first part of his narrative [*Od.* 7.243–5]: τοῦτο δέ τοι ἐρέω ὅ μ' ἀνείρεαι ἠδὲ μεταλλᾷς· / Ὠγυγίη[66] τις νῆσος ἀπόπροθεν εἰν ἁλὶ κεῖται, / ἔνθα μὲν . . . (But this I will tell you, of which you ask and inquire. There is an island, Ogygia, which lies far off in the sea. There . . .). The tale of his wanderings will be continued and concluded in *Odyssey* 9–12. Cadmus replies to Arete with a single speech, Nonnus' slim-line version of Odysseus' expansive self-narration [3.257–9]: ἀλλ' ἐρέω περίπυστον ἐμὴν εὔπαιδα γενέθλην· / ἔστι πόλις, κλυτὸν Ἄργος, ἐδέθλιον ἵππιον Ἥρης, / νήσου Τανταλίδαο μεσόμφαλος. ἔνθα δὲ . . . (But I will tell you my lineage with its noble sons. There is a city Argos, famous for horses, and Hera's habitation, the midnavel of the island of Tantalides. There . . .). The verbal and structural similarities between the two passages disguise the fact that Cadmus is engaged in a very different kind of narration. Odysseus tells the story of his wanderings; Cadmus tells the story of his family. This difference in subject mattter is made clear at 3.245–6: ἁλιπλάγκτοιο μεληδόνος οἶστρον ἐάσσας, / φαιδρὸν ἑὸν γένος εἶπε (He left aside the fever of his sorrowful sea-wanderings and spoke of his illustrious lineage).

Soon after Odysseus has arrived at the court of Alcinous, he is offered the hand of a more-than-willing Nausicaa in marriage [*Od.* 7.311–16]. Nonnus restages the scene, but sets the offer of marriage *after* the hero's narrative [3.373ff.]. Most significantly, in place of a willing Nausicaa, he has set an unwilling Harmonia. Her witty denunciation of Cadmus reads like a rhetorical set piece on the subject 'what Nausicaa would say if she did not want to marry Odysseus' [4.42–4]: ἄλλοι ἐμοὶ μνηστῆρες ἀρείονές εἰσι πολῖται· / τί χρέος ἦν ἀνάεδνον ἔχειν τινὰ γυμνὸν ἀκοίτην / ἀλλοδαπὸν περίφοιτον, ἀλυσκάζοντα τοκῆα; (I have others to woo me, and better ones, of our own city: why must I have a bedfellow with empty hands, naked and bare, a foreign vagrant, a runaway from his father). The use of γυμνός here, as elsewhere in Nonnus, is figurative,[67] but it takes on a more literal resonance when the Homeric allusion is factored in. It reminds us that when Odysseus was swept up onto the shore of

[66] Nonnus refers to a similar sounding Ὤγυγος at 3.205.
[67] Chuvin (1976) 153.

Phaeacia, he was quite literally naked [*Od.* 6.136]: γυμνός περ ἐών.

The two strands of allusions which have here been teased apart (one Argonautic/Apollonian, the other Odyssean/Homeric) are in practice inextricably entwined. Chamberlayne described how 'Nonnus follows his usual plan of combining motives from Homer and Apollonius, in free composition in the taste of his own day'.[68] Nonnus' use of literary allusion is not, however, as straightforward as Chamberlayne's words suggest. Long before the *Dionysiaca*, Apollonius' *Argonautica* was already caught up in a self-conscious dialogue with Homer's *Odyssey*. In the words of Richard Hunter, 'Apollonius makes fruitful use of the quasi-paradox that the Homeric texts are both anterior to the *Argonautica* and therefore part of the experience of all readers, and also subsequent to it, in the sense that the Argonauts belong to the generation before the Trojan War'.[69] Nonnus' blending of Argonautic and Odyssean allusion thus exploits a pre-existing relationship between the two narratives. He has, moreover, given Apollonius' allusive screw an extra half-turn. It is not just the Homeric narratives that are posterior to the story of Dionysus, but also the Argonautic narrative: though the Argonauts belong to a generation before the heroes of Troy, the narrative time of the *Dionysiaca* belongs to an era even before that. For this reason, Cadmus and Harmonia can be seen as pre-figurements of *two* sets of epic relatives: both Jason and Medea, *and* Odysseus and Nausicaa. As a poem that is both pre-Homeric and pre-Apollonian, the *Dionysiaca* is thus able to claim a position of primacy at the head of the epic tradition.

The titanomachic disturbance of Books 1–2 has now been followed by a network of allusions to the narrative of the Argonauts, extending from Books 3–5. This narrative sequence accords with the sequence of events preserved in the first book of Apollodorus' *Library*, in which the struggles of the Titans and the giants (including the insurrection of Typhon) is closely followed by the story of Jason and the Argonauts.[70] The presence of Odyssean allusion in Book 3 has been explained in terms of a pre-existing connection between the adventures of Odysseus and Jason. However, before moving on to the 'Marriage of Cadmus

[68] Chamberlayne (1916) 63.
[69] Hunter (1993b) 24.
[70] Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.1 (Titanomachy); 1.6.1–3 (Gigantomachy); 1.9.1–28 (Argonautica).

and Harmonia', I wish to add a note of methodological clarification. In my investigation of Nonnus' use of mythological allusion, I have placed clear emphasis on the network of Argonautic allusion in Books 3–5 over Odyssean allusion in Book 3. I do not intend by this emphasis to suppress, or even deny, the force of Odyssean allusion at this stage in the epic, nor do I wish to assert the absolute authority of my reading. As suggested in the preceding chapter, the 'narrative' of the Dionysiac Cycle which I am here tracing, remains one of many such narratives, one of a multiplicity of alternative matrices and webs of meaning, which are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually excluding. A different reading of the wanderings of Cadmus might well emphasize the Odyssean elements of his journey,[71] balanced by the Odyssean wanderings of Dionysus in Books 40–8.[72] My point is not to deny the value and validity of such readings; it is merely to point out that such readings are not my present concern.

4. *Marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia*

At the beginning of Book 5 Cadmus celebrates his marriage with Harmonia. It is a grand affair: Theban girls sing and dance in celebration; Aphrodite and Ares, the parents of Harmonia, are in prominent attendance; Apollo turns up with the nine Muses and Victory acts as a bridesmaid. Hermes purposefully leaves his wand of sleep at home, and thus ensures a lively party atmosphere [5.115–17]: καὶ λιγυροῖς στομάτεσσι φιλοσκάρθμῳ παρὰ παστῷ / πάννυχος ἔπλετο κῶμος ἀκοιμήτοιο χορείης / μελπομένων (All night long, the merry rout of untiring dancers were singing with clear voices beside the bridal chamber in happy romps). Then, all the gods—Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, Ares, Apollo, Hephaistus, Hera and Aphrodite—bestow presents on the couple.

In certain significant ways the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia suggests analogy with another divine celebrity occasion: the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Analogy between the two events had in fact been established as far back as Pindar, who exploited the parallels in his third Pythian Ode:

[71] Such a reading would no doubt also wish to focus on analogies between Cadmus/Odysseus and Typhon/Polyphemus; and the Siren simile at 2.11–19.
[72] See pp. 95–109.

αἰὼν δ' ἀσφαλὴς
οὐκ ἔγεντ' οὔτ' Αἰακίδᾳ παρὰ Πηλεῖ
οὔτε παρ' ἀντιθέῳ Κάδμῳ· λέγονται μὰν βροτῶν
ὄλβον ὑπέρτατον οἳ σχεῖν, οἵτε καὶ χρυσαμπύκων
μελπομενᾶν ἐν ὄρει Μοισᾶν καὶ ἐν ἑπταπύλοις
ἄϊον Θήβαις, ὁπόθ' Ἁρμονίαν γᾶμεν βοῶπιν,
ὁ δὲ Νηρέος εὐβούλου Θέτιν παῖδα κλυτάν.

(But a life free from reverses was the fate neither of Peleus, son of Aeacus, nor of god-like Cadmus. Yet we learned that they attained the highest happiness of all mortal men, in that they heard the Muses of the golden snood singing on Mount Pelion, and in seven-gated Thebes, what time Cadmus took to wife Harmonia, with those full-orbed eyes; and when Peleus wedded Thetis, the famous daughter of wise Nereus.)

[*P.* 3.86–92]

In both instances entertainment is provided by the Muses; in both, a mortal man takes an immortal bride. Moreover, these are the only two earthly weddings which can boast of the presence of Olympian divinities, laden with gifts.[73] As Pindar gloomily suggests, both celebrations are marred by later misfortune:[74] Peleus' son Achilles will be killed at Troy, whilst tragedy awaits Ino, Autonoe and Agave, the daughters of Cadmus. Immediately signs of threatening trouble can be observed in two particular wedding gifts: in one case the apple of Discord, in the other the necklace of Harmonia.[75]

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[73] On gods and men see 5.119–20: ἦν δὲ νοῆσαι / Κάδμον ὁμοῦ καὶ Ζῆνα μιῆς ψαύοντα τραπέζης (One might see Cadmus and Zeus touching the same table); compare Zeus's promise to Cadmus at 2.666–8: καὶ χθονίου δείπνοιο θεοὺς ἔχε δαιτυμονῆας. / ἵξομαι εἰς σέο δῶμα· τί φίλτερον ἄλλο νοήσεις / ἢ μακάρων βασιλῆα τεῆς ψαύοντα τραπέζης (Gods shall be guests at your wedding feast on the earth. I will visit your house: what more could you want than to see the King of the Blessed touching your table). For gifts see 5.125–6; Apollod. *Epit.* 3.4.2, 3.13.5; Cypria F3 (*EGF* p. 36): κατὰ γὰρ τὸν Πηλέως καὶ Θέτιδος γάμον οἱ θεοὶ συναχθέντες εἰς τὸ Πήλιον ἐπ' εὐωχίᾳ ἐκόμιζον Πηλεῖ δῶρα, Χίρων δὲ μελίαν εὐθαλῆ τεμὼν εἰς δόρυ παρέσχεν. φασὶ δὲ Ἀθηνᾶν μὲν ξέσαι αὐτό, Ἥφαιστον δὲ κατασκευάσαι . . . ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ τῷ τὰ Κύπρια ποιήσαντι (For at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the gods gathered together on Pelion to feast and brought Peleus gifts. Chiron gave him a stout ashen shaft which he had cut for a spear, and Athena, it is said, polished it, and Hephaestus fitted it with a head . . . The story is given by the author of the *Cypria*). Catullus reminds us that the marriage of Peleus and Thetis was the last time that the gods kept company with men on earth. Cat. 64.384–408; 407–8: *quare nec talis dignantur visere coetus, / nec se contingi patiuntur lumine claro.* Cf. Calasso (1993) 387.

[74] Pi. *P.* 3.96–103.

[75] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.2: μῆλον περὶ κάλλους Ἔρις ἐμβάλλει Ἥρᾳ καὶ Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ (Strife throws an apple as a prize of beauty to be contended for by Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite).

Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* suggests that the apple of discord was a strategem devised by Zeus and Themis as a catalyst for the Trojan War: Ζεὺς βουλεύεται μετὰ τῆς Θέμιδος περὶ τοῦ Τρωϊκοῦ πολέμου· παραγενομένη δὲ Ἔρις εὐωχουμένων τῶν θεῶν ἐν τοῖς Πηλέως γάμοις, νεῖκος περὶ κάλλους ἀνίστησιν Ἀθηνᾷ, Ἥρᾳ καὶ Ἀφροδίτῃ . . . (Zeus plans with Themis to bring about the Trojan War. Strife arrives while the gods are feasting at the marriage of Peleus and starts a dispute between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite as to which of them is fairest).[76] The ensuing contest to decide who is the apple's rightful recipient results in the abduction of Helen by Paris and the start of the Trojan War

At the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia there appears a similarly portentious gift, in the form of a necklace. On the face of it, the necklace of Harmony looks like the very antithesis of the apple of Discord. But it is similarity, and not difference, that marks the relationship between these two gifts. In both cases the goddess of Love plays a prominent role: it was to Aphrodite that the shepherd Paris gave the apple; it was from Aphrodite that Harmonia received the necklace. Like its apple counterpart, the double-snaked necklace is a most ambiguous gift, destined to play a sinister role in the later tragic story of Thebes.[77] This is the very same gift which one day Polynices will give to Eriphyle for the betrayal of her husband Amphiaraus, during the struggles of the 'Seven against Thebes'.[78] Nor does the disastrous effect of this gift take long to work its way into the narrative of Dionysus: only one hundred lines after the necklace ecphrasis comes the tragic story of Actaeon [5.287ff]. This is followed by an unrelenting catalogue of family misfortunes for the offspring of Cadmus and Harmonia, which culminates in the death of Semele and the persecution of her child Dionysus.

Given the disasters which await the family of Harmonia it would be appropriate to examine her necklace in a little more detail:

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[76] Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 5–9 (*EGF* p. 31).

[77] The Theban plays of Aeschylus and possibly the *Thebaid* of Antimachus were available to Nonnus as sources for this later story. See Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 3.458–9; cf. Matthews (1996) 75.

[78] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.2: ὅτε οὖν ἐπὶ Θήβας ἔδει στρατεύειν, Ἀδράστου μὲν παρακαλοῦντος Ἀμφιαράου δὲ ἀποτρέποντος, Ἐριφύλη τὸν ὅρμον λαβοῦσα ἔπεισεν αὐτὸν σὺν Ἀδράστῳ στρατεύειν (Accordingly, when war was to be made on Thebes, and the measure was advocated by Adrastus and opposed by Amphiaraus, Eriphyle accepted the necklace and persuaded him to march with Adrastus); cf. Calasso (1993) 387.

πολυφράδμων <δ'> Ἀφροδίτη
χρύσεον ὅρμον ἔχοντα λίθων πολυδαίδαλον αἴγλην
λευκὸν ἐρευθιόωντι συνήρμοσεν αὐχένι κούρης,
Ἡφαίστου σοφὸν ἔργον, ὅ περ κάμε Κυπρογενείῃ,
τοξευτῆρος Ἔρωτος ὅπως ὀπτήριον εἴη·
ἔλπετο γὰρ Κυθέρειαν ἀεὶ βαρύγουνος ἀκοίτης
υἷα τεκεῖν σκάζοντα, ποδῶν μίμημα τοκῆος·
ἀλλὰ μάτην ἐδόκησε, καὶ ἀρτίπον υἷα νοήσας
λαμπόμενον πτερύγεσσιν ὁμοίιον υἱέι Μαίης
ποικίλον ὅρμον ἔτευξεν, ὃς ἀστεροφεγγέι νώτῳ
ὡς ὄφις ἦν ἑλικῶδες ἔχων δέμας.

(Cunning Aphrodite clasped a golden necklace showing pale about the girl's blushing neck, a clever work of Hephaestus set with sparkling gems in masterly refinement. This he made for his Cyprian bride, a gift for his first glimpse of Archer Eros. For the heavyknee bridegroom always expected that Cytherea would bear him a hobbling son, having the image of his father in his feet. But his thought was mistaken; and when he beheld a whole-footed son brilliant with wings like Maia's son Hermes, he made this magnificent necklace.)

[5.135–45]

Ambiguous fortune surrounds not only the necklace, but also the text of the *Dionysiaca* at this point. Immediately preceding the necklace a golden throne is given to Harmonia by golden-throned Hera. After Keydell and Chuvin one reads [5.134–5]: καὶ θρόνον εὐλάιγγα πόρε χρυσόθρονος Ἥρη, / Ἄρεα κυδαίνουσα.—Πολυφράδμων <δ'> Ἀφροδίτη . . . (Golden-throned Hera provided a jewel set throne, wishing to please Ares. Cunning Aphrodite . . .). It follows from this reading that Hera has given the throne to Harmonia out of regard for Ares. There is, however, another way of editing the text. After Marcellus and Rouse one may choose to read [5.134–5]: καὶ θρόνον εὐλάιγγα πόρε χρυσόθρονος Ἥρη· / Ἄρεα κυδαίνουσα πολυφράδμων Ἀφροδίτη . . . (Golden-throned Hera provided a jewel-set throne. Wishing to please Ares, cunning Aphrodite . . .). This alternative version has much to recommend it. Ares and Aphrodite frequently appear together in the *Dionysiaca*: most recently and emphatically at 5.80–2.[79] By contrast, Nonnus places little emphasis on the relationship

[79] 5.80–2: πέμπτην δ' Ἄρεϊ δῶκε, πόρε τριτάτην Ἀφροδίτῃ, / ἀμφοτέρων ἑκάτερθεν ὅπως Φαέθων μέσος εἴη, / γείτονα θοῦρον Ἄρηα διατμήγων Ἀφροδίτης (The fifth [sc. planet] he gave to Ares, the third to Aphrodite, in order that Phaethon might be between them both on either side, and cut off his neighbour the furious Ares from Aphrodite).

between Ares and Hera.[80] Furthermore, since Harmonia is the bastard child of Ares and Aphrodite, it seems fitting that Aphrodite should give the necklace as a means of pleasing her lover. There appears to be no particular reason why Hera should wish to please Ares, other than the fact that she is his mother.

What then of the epithet used to describe Aphrodite at this point: πολυφράδμων? The word is a hapax in Nonnus and seems to have been taken from the invocation of Eros at the beginning of the fourth book of Oppian's *Halieutica*.[81] It is there suggested that πολυφράδμων 'Αφροδίτη is the mother of Eros [Opp. *H.* 4.28]. Mair translates 'Aphrodite of many counsels'.[82] The word derives ultimately from φράζω and is taken by LSJ to mean 'very eloquent' and hence also 'wise'. A slightly different resonance can be found at *AP* 9.816.2, where the epithet is used to describe Odysseus: ideas of eloquence and wisdom now take on the cast of craft and cunning. Cunning Aphrodite? The epithet seems curious or simply irrelevant if we follow the punctuation of Keydell and Chuvin. However, if we adopt the reading of Marcellus and Rouse, the epithet assumes an immediate and pointed resonance: Aphrodite employs cunning in the presentation of her gift to Harmonia. She does honour to Ares, the father of her child, rather than to her husband Hephaestus, the maker of the necklace.

The lame Hephaestus had always expected that Aphrodite would bear him a lame son [5.140–1]. When this did not turn out to be the case and Eros was born sure of foot, then the divine blacksmith crafted a necklace for his wife [5.142–5]. The reading of 5.135 suggested by Marcellus and Rouse undermines the apparent simplicity of this story. This line places emphasis on the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares. It suggests a very obvious reason why Eros does not share the physical deformity of Hephaestus, namely that Ares not Hephaestus was the father of the child. A fragment of Simonides tells us as much [fr. 72]: σχέτλιε παῖ δολόμηδες 'Αφροδίτας, / τὸν ῎Αρει κακομαχάνῳ τέκεν (troublesome and duplicitous child of Aphrodite, whom she bore to evil-minded Ares).

This suggestion in turn raises another possibility: did the cuckold blacksmith forge a deliberately deceptive gift in an act of calculated

[80] See only 36.25–7.
[81] Reference noted by Chuvin (1976) *ad loc.*
[82] Mair (1928) *ad loc.*

revenge? ποικίλον ὅρμον ἔτευξεν [5.144] is all that the text says. How exactly do we render ποικίλον? Rouse translates 'magnificent', Chuvin 'ciselé'.[83] Both versions deny the word its essentially ambiguous quality.[84] Perhaps Eros really was the child of Hephaestus; or perhaps he was not, and the necklace was crafted as subtle act of revenge. Either way, the description of the necklace as ποικίλον encourages us to have our suspicions.[85]

5. *Birth and childhood of Dionysus*

The marriages entered into by both Peleus and Cadmus result, eventually, in the birth of an outstanding child: a son Achilles for Peleus and Thetis, a grandson Dionysus for Cadmus and Harmonia; the one destined to be the greatest hero of the Trojan War, the other of the Indian War. Analogy between these two heroes is not restricted to the circumstances of their parents' or grandparents' weddings. Nonnus' description of both the birth and early years of Dionysus sets itself up as analogous to the birth and early years of Achilles.

In the first place it is worth recording that the two heroes are born as a result of a union between a mortal and a divinity: Dionysus has a mortal mother and a divine father, Achilles has a divine mother and a mortal father.[86] Furthermore, they both suffered fiery 'double' births: the baby Dionysus is plucked from the blazing womb of Semele and sewn into his father's thigh; Thetis attempts to give second birth to her child, to make him immortal, by burning away the mortal part of him in a fire.[87] Both also receive significant names as

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[83] Chuvin (1976) *ad loc.*

[84] For the ambiguities and the multivalence of this term see the excellent discussion in Lindsay (1965) 380–4; 381: 'Meanings of changing, varying, manifold come in: applicable to song or prose-style. Intricate, complex, abstruse, subtle, changeable, unstable, are natural extensions . . . it helps to sum up . . . the moment of transformation and of deep realisation, when different levels of life collide'; (1965) 383: 'One aspect then of the moment of change, with its variegations, is its revelation of *unexpected and treacherous depths*' [my emphasis].

[85] The mythographer Hyginus had his own idea: he records that Hephaestus added a curse to the necklace *after* he had been cuckolded. See Hyg. *F.* 148; reference in Frazer (1921).

[86] As a result of this mixed birth both heroes have an uncommon anxiety about mortality and immortality.

[87] On Dionysus see 1.1–10; 8.406: οὐρανίῳ πυρὶ γυῖα λελουμένον (his limbs were washed with heavenly fire); on Achilles see Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6.

a result of the circumstances of their birth and upbringing: Dionysus (Zeus-limp) is so named by Hermes, on account of the fact that Zeus walked with a limp, when carrying the baby in his thigh;[88] Achilles (lacking lips) is so named by Chiron 'because he had not put his lips to the breast'.[89]

Whether or not the *Cypria* did narrate the early years of Achilles, the story nevertheless formed an established part of the mythological tradition.[90] In the third Nemean, Pindar tells how Achilles, from the age of six, would kill lions and wild boars with his tiny sword and carry the spoils to the centaur Chiron [*N.* 3.43–9]. Like Pindar's Achilles, Nonnus' Dionysus loves the hunt from an early age [9.169–70]: καὶ νέος ἐνναέτηρος ἔχων θηροκτόνον ἀλκήν / ποσσὶ μὲν ὠκυτέροισι παρέστιχεν ἴθμα λαγωοῦ (At nine years old the youngster went a-hunting his game to the kill. He passed the coursing hare with feet quicker still).[91] Nor does he have just one centaur guardian, but is looked after by a host of them [14.143]: ἀνδροφυὴς δ' ἑτέρη Κενταυριὰς ἵκετο φύτλη . . . (Another kind of the twiform Centaurs also appeared); [14.150] παιδοκόμοι ῥυτῆρες ἀθηήτου Διονύσου (They were the cherishing saviours of Dionysus when he was hidden from every eye).

The two heroes share problematic and peripatetic childhoods. Achilles passes from his mother Thetis to his tutor Chiron to his guardian Lycomedes,[92] so Dionysus passes from his mother Semele to his father Zeus to his aunt Ino and then on to his guardian Rhea. In both cases the hero is hidden away for his own protection. A

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88 9.18–22.

89 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6.

90 Davies (1989) 51–2: 'Scholars have also wanted to assign to the *Cypria* a number of unHomeric traditions that are so wide-spread and tenacious in later accounts that they must (it is felt) have featured in some early and influential epic. These include . . . the picture of Achilles reared (like his father) by the centaur Chiron and fed on the innards and marrow of wild beasts so that he sympathetically absorbed their speed and strength'.

91 It is interesting to note that, according to Apollodorus *Epit.* 3.13.8, Achilles was transferred to the court of Lycomedes at the age of nine.

92 Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6: κομίζει δὲ τὸν παῖδα πρὸς Χείρωνα Πηλεύς. ὁ δὲ λαβὼν αὐτὸν ἔτρεφε σπλάγχνοις λεόντων καὶ συῶν ἀγρίων καὶ ἄρκτων μυελοῖς, καὶ ὠνόμασεν Ἀχιλλέα (πρότερον δὲ ἦν ὄνομα αὐτῷ Λιγύρων) ὅτι τὰ χείλη μαστοῖς οὐ προσήνεγκε (Peleus brought the child to Chiron, who received him and fed him on the inwards of lions and wild swine and the marrows of bears, and named him Achilles, because he had not put his lips to the breast; but before that time his name was Ligyron); see also Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8.

first attempt is made to hide Dionysus in the palace of Ino [9.101–2]: ἡ τότε Βάκχον ἑλοῦσα θεοτρεφέων ἀπὸ μαζῶν / ἀπροϊδῆ ζοφόεντι κατεκλήισε βερέθρῳ (She then took Bacchus away from those god-feeding breasts, and hid him from all eyes in a dark pit). Like the attempt at concealing Achilles,[93] it is not a success [9.132–4]: τὸν δὲ πολυκλήιστον ὑπὸ σφρηγῖδα μελάθρου / ὄμμασιν ἀπλανέεσσιν ἴδεν πανεπόψιος Ἥρη / Μύστιδος ἀφράστοιο μυχῷ πεφυλαγμένον οἴκου (Here behind the many keys and seals of the palace all-seeing Hera spied him with her infallible eyes, guarded by Mystis in that hidden corner of the house). Dionysus is relocated this time to the court of Rhea. There the Corybants dance noisily around the baby boy in order to keep him hidden [9.166]: κουροσύνην κλέπτοντες ἀεξομένου Διονύσου (concealing the growing boyhood of Dionysus).[94]

In an attempt to prevent her son dying in the Trojan War, Thetis hides Achilles in women's clothes and sends him as a maiden to the court of Lycomedes.[95] Dionysus is of course notorious for his effeminate looks, and he is most often found in the company of his female followers.[96] At 16.171–3 the huntress Nicaea denounces the god for his soft and womanly figure [16.171–3]: οὐκ ἂν ἀκοίτην / ἁβροκόμην ἀσίδηρον ἀνάλκιδα θήλεϊ μορφῇ / εἶχον ἐγὼ Διόνυσον (I would not have Dionysus for bedfellow, soft-haired, weaponless, spiritless, shaped like a woman).[97] In an attempt to avoid detection (and the murderous intentions) of Hera, Dionysus makes explicit use of a womanly disguise [14.159–64]: πῇ δὲ γυναικείην φορέων ψευδήμονα μορφήν / μιμηλὴ κροκόπεπλος ἐν εἵμασι φαίνετο κούρη / ἀρτιθαλής, φθονερῆς δὲ παραπλάζων νόον Ἥρης / χείλεσιν ἀντιτύποισιν ἀνήρυγε θῆλυν ἰωήν, /

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[93] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8.

[94] The same Corybants who guarded his father Zeus; cf. Callim. *Hymn* 1.51–3. The early years of Dionysus do not just look forward to Achilles, but also look back to the early years of his father. Dionysus is hidden away from Hera, as Zeus was hidden away from Cronus. In fact, as Nonnus makes clear, Dionysus is given over to the care of Rhea, who had herself looked after Zeus [9.153–4]: μαῖα Διωνύσοιο Διὸς γενέτειρα γενέσθω / μήτηρ Ζηνὸς ἐουσα καὶ υἱωνοῖο τιθήνη (Let the mother of Zeus be nanny to Dionysus—mother of Zeus and the nurse of her grandson).

[95] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8.

[96] See, for example, Otto (1965) 171–80.

[97] Cf. 20.209–10: βροτὸν ἄρσενι μηρῷ / υἱέα θῆλυν ἔτικτε πατὴρ ἐμὸς ὑψιμέδων Ζεύς (My father Zeus ruling on high brought forth a womanish son from his manly thigh); 44.134: Λυδὸν ἐμὸν θεράποντα κομίσσατε, θῆλυν ἀλήτην (Bring here my Lydian slave, that womanish vagabond). Frazer (1921) 2.73 n. 2 noted without elaboration that 'the youthful Dionysus, like the youthful Achilles, is said to have been brought up as a maiden'.

καὶ πλοκάμοις εὔοδμον ἐπεσφήκωσε καλύπτρην / θήλεα πέπλα φέρων πολυδαίδαλα . . . (Often he would show himself like a young girl in saffron robes and take on the feigned shape of a woman; to mislead the mind of spiteful Hera, he moulded his lips to speak in a girlish voice, tied a scented veil on his hair. He put on all a woman's many-coloured garments . . .).[98]

Although disguised as a woman, this does not prevent Achilles from conducting amorous affairs as a man: he has a son Pyrrhus/Neoptolemus by Deidamia, the daughter of Lycomedes.[99] Nor are his affections exclusive to women: when he sets out for the Trojan War he is accompanied by his ἐρώμενος, Patroclus.[100] In a similar way, Dionysus has his own male lover in the satyr Ampelus [10.175–8]: καί ποτε θηρεύων ὑπὸ ῥωγάδα δάσκιον ὕλης / ἥλικος ἠιθέοιο ῥοδώπιδι θέλγετο μορφῇ. / ἤδη γὰρ Φρυγίης ὑπὸ δειράδα κοῦρος ἀθύρων / Ἄμπελος ἠέξητο, νεοτρεφὲς ἔρνος Ἐρώτων (Once while hunting in the shady lurking wood he was delighted by the rosy form of a young comrade. For Ampelus was a merry boy who had grown up already on the Phrygian hills, a new sprout of the Loves).[101]

The death of Ampelus brings the carefree childhood of Dionysus to an end. It also marks a significant point in Nonnus' engagement

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[98] But just as Odysseus sees through the disguise of Achilles, so Hera saw through the Dionysiac deception [14.168].

[99] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8.

[100] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.8. Nonnus exploits further the parallels with Achilles and Patroclus. In *Iliad* 16 Patroclus is killed when he goes out to battle against the Trojans, ignoring the advice of Achilles, and the warnings of Apollo; Ampelus meets his end when he takes a ride on the back of a bull, heedless of Dionysus' warning [11.80]: μοῦνον ἀμειλίκτοιο κεράατα δείδιθι ταύρου (Fear only the horns of the pitiless bull). A satyr brings news of the death of Ampelus to Dionysus—[11.225] δυσάγγελος ἤλυθε Βάκχῳ (brought the bad news to Bacchus)—just as Antilochus brings news to Achilles [*Il.* 18.2]: Ἀντίλοχος δ' Ἀχιλῆϊ πόδας ταχὺς ἄγγελος ἦλθε (But Antilochus, swift of foot, came as a messenger to Achilles). Dionysus cuts off a lock of his hair and lays it on the corpse [11.239–41], imitating the actions of Achilles over the body of Patroclus [*Il.* 23.141–53]; cf. 11.464–7. Dionysus now laments his immortality and wishes that he might accompany Ampelus to the grave. [11.325–7]. Achilles expresses similar sentiments: he wishes that Peleus had married a mortal [*Il.* 18.86–7] and expresses the wish to die [*Il.* 18.98]. It may be further observed that just as Achilles re-enters battle after the death of his lover, so Dionysus only makes his entry into the Indian War after the death of his lover.

[101] Emphasis on the young age of Ampelus clearly sets him in the role of ἐρώμενος to Dionysus' ἐραστής. Cf. 10.235–7: εἰ δὲ σὺν ἡβητῆρι μιῆς ἔψαυσε τραπέζης, / κούρου φθεγγομένου, πολυτερπέας εἶχεν ἀκουάς· / παυομένου δὲ νέοιο, κατηφέας εἶχε παρειάς (If he sat with the young man at one table, when the boy spoke he lent a delighted ear; when he ceased melancholy spread over his cheeks).

with the mythological cycle. In the first twelve books of his epic, Nonnus has sustained analogy with the early part of the cycle, enacting his own 'versions' of the union of Uranus and Gaia, the battle of the Titans, and the story of Jason and the Argonauts. Most recently in the story of the birth and adolescence of Dionysus, he has developed and sustained allusion to the story of Achilles. Allusion to Achilles points the way forward to the next stage of the Dionysiac Cycle. Nonnus' allusive cycle now moves forward with Dionysus/Achilles into the early stages of that most celebrated of all mythological narratives: the Trojan War.

The Cycle of Dionysus II: The Road to War [13–24]

1. *Declarations of war*

a) *Mission statement*

> Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ προέηκεν ἐς αὔλια θέσκελα Ῥείης
> Ἶριν ἀπαγγέλλουσαν ἐγερσιμόθῳ Διονύσῳ,
> ὄφρα δίκης ἀδίδακτον ὑπερφιάλων γένος Ἰνδῶν
> Ἀσίδος ἐξελάσειεν ἑῷ ποινήτορι θύρσῳ,
> ναύμαχον ἀμήσας ποταμήιον υἷα κεράστην,
> Δηριάδην βασιλῆα, καὶ ἔθνεα πάντα διδάξῃ
> ὄργια νυκτιχόρευτα καὶ οἴνοπα καρπὸν ὀπώρης.

> (Father Zeus sent Iris to the divine halls of Rhea, to inform battle-stirring Dionysus, that he must drive out of Asia with his avenging thyrsus the proud race of Indians untaught of justice: he was to sweep from the sea the horned son of a river, Deriades the king, and teach all nations the sacred dances of the vigil and the purple fruit of the vintage.) [13.1–7]

Zeus's plan for the Indian War bears more than a passing resemblance to the plan which he set in action for the Trojan War. According to a passage from the Homeric scholia (whose origins presumably lie in the *Cypria* itself), the Trojan War was set in motion by Zeus to rid the world of excess population, and thereby alleviate its suffering.[102] Both campaigns are glossed in identical terms, as

[102] F1 (*EGF* pp. 34–5): ἦν ὅτε μυρία φῦλα κατὰ χθόνα †πλαζόμενα / <. . .> βαθυστέρνου πλάτος αἴης. / Ζεὺς δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε καὶ ἐν πυκιναῖς πραπίδεσσι / †σύνθετο κουφίσαι παμβώτορα γαίης ἀνθρώπων† / ῥιπίσσας πολέμου μεγάλην ἔριν Ἰλιακοῖο / ὄφρα κενώσειεν †θανάτου βάρος· οἱ δ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ / ἥρωες κτείνοντο· Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο

'the plan of Zeus'—Διὸς . . . βουλήν.[103] In addition, like its Trojan counterpart, the Indian campaign is motivated by a desire to ease the wretched plight of humankind. However, the plan for the Indian War is not that people should die,[104] but rather that all the world should learn about the pain-killing qualities of wine.[105] Here then is a new plan for a new cycle with a new ethical code. In comparison with the Trojan Cycle the Dionysiac Cycle appears to be much more compassionate.[106]

b) *Assembly of the troops*

At this point in Nonnus' cycle we are plunged immediately into the assembly of troops and preparations for war.[107] As soon as Iris has gone back to heaven,[108] Rhea sends out a messenger to summon

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βουλή (There was a time when the countless tribes of men . . . [oppressed?] the surface of the deep-bosomed earth, and Zeus saw it and had pity and in his wise heart ?resolved to relieve the all-nurturing earth of men by causing the great struggle of the Ilian war, that the load of ?death might empty the world. And so the heroes were slain in Troy and the plan of Zeus came to pass).

103 13.18: παιδὶ Διὸς παρεόντι Διὸς μυκήσατο βουλήν (She told the plan of Zeus to Zeus's son). Cf. *Il.* 1.5: Διὸς δὲ τελείετο βουλή (The plan of Zeus was accomplished). The proem to Homer's *Iliad* hereby makes allusion to the very beginning of the Trojan War. On the scholastic debate generated by this phrase see Severyns (1928) 246–7.

104 Note that Zeus's plan [13.1–7] says nothing explicit about the killing of the Indians, but focuses instead on their re-education [13.6]: καὶ ἔθνεα πάντα διδάξῃ. Iris, by contrast, relates a distorted version of this plan to Dionysus which focuses solely on the killing of the Indians [13.19–20]: ἀλκήεις Διόνυσε τεὸς γενέτης σε κελεύει / εὐσεβίης ἀδίδακτον ἀιστῶσαι γένος Ἰνδῶν (Mighty Dionysus! Your father bids you destroy the race of Indians, untaught of piety).

105 In Book 7 Zeus hit upon the idea of sending wine down to earth, as a substitute nectar to assuage the cares of mankind [7.76–8]: νέκταρ ἔα μακάρεσσι, καὶ ἀνδράσιν ἄλκαρ ἀνίης / αὐτοχύτῳ γλυκὺν οἶνον ἐοικότα νέκταρι δώσω· / ἄλλο ποτὸν μερόπεσσιν ἐφάρμενον (Leave nectar to the Blessed and I will give mankind to heal their sorrows delicious wine, another drink like nectar self-distilled, and one suited to mortals).

106 In Book 7 Aion expressed his dismay at the sight of mortals losing their lives in war [7.29–31]: Ζεῦ ἄνα, καὶ σὺ δόκευε κατηφέος ἄλγεα κόσμου. / οὐχ ὁράᾳς, ὅτι γαῖαν ὅλην οἴστρησεν Ἐνυώ / ὥριον ἀμώουσα ταχυφθιμένης στάχυν ἥβης; (Lord Zeus! behold yourself the sorrows of a despairing world! Do you not see that Enyo has made the whole earth mad, mowing season by season her harvest of quick-perishing youth?). This ultimately led Zeus to conceive of the idea of wine.

107 In the original narrative of the *Cypria*, however, it took a full generation to bring Zeus's plan to fruition.

108 From Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* we learn that Menelaus started to plan war against Troy with his brother Agamemnon, once he learned of the abduction of Helen from Iris [Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 32–4 (*EGF* p. 31)]: καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα

together troops [13.39–42]: καὶ στρατιὴν πολύμορφον ἀολλίζων Διονύσῳ / Πύρριχος ἀενάοιο διέδραμεν ἕδρανα κόσμου· / Εὐρώπης δὲ γένεθλα καὶ Ἀσίδος ἔθνεα γαίης / πάντας ἄγων νόστησεν ἐς ἁβροβίων χθόνα Λυδῶν (Pyrrhicus, gathering a varied army for Dionysus, scoured all the settlements of the eternal world; all the nations of Europe and the races of the Asiatic land he brought to rendezvous in the land of the livedainty Lydians). This clearly parallels the assembly of the Greek forces at Aulis, prior to the Trojan War.[109] Indeed, Nonnus makes an explicit and extended reference to the 'later' gathering of the troops at Aulis and the sacrifice of Iphigenia [13.104–7]: οἵ τ' ἔχον ἀγρομένων ξεινηδόκον οὖδας Ἀχαιῶν / Αὐλίδα πετρήεσσαν, ἐδέθλιον Ἰοχεαίρης, / ἧχι θεὰ βαρύμηνις ὀρεσσαύλῳ παρὰ βωμῷ / δέκτο θυηπολίην ψευδήμονος Ἰφιγενείης (Those also came who possessed the place where the assembling Achaeans found refuge, rocky Aulis, pavement of the Archeress: where the goddess in heavy resentment received at her altar in the mountains the offering of a pretended Iphigenia).

In keeping with the traditions of the mythological cycle, the muster is followed by a catalogue of the troops.[110] Before he begins, Nonnus makes an explicit call to Homer for inspiration:

> ἀλλὰ πολυσπερέων προμάχων ἡρωίδα φύτλην
> καὶ λασίων Σατύρων, Κενταυρίδος αἷμα γενέθλης,
> Σιληνῶν τε φάλαγγα, δασυκνήμοιο γενέθλης,
> καὶ στίχα Βασσαρίδων, Κορυβαντίδες, εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι.
> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόσα φῦλα δέκα γλώσσῃσιν ἀείσω
> οὐδὲ δέκα στομάτεσσι χέων χαλκόθροον ἠχώ,
> ὁππόσα Βάκχος ἄγειρε δορυσσόος. ἀλλὰ λιγαίνων
> ἡγεμόνας καὶ Ὅμηρον ἀοσσητῆρα καλέσσω
> εὐεπίης ὅλον ὅρμον, ἐπεὶ πλωτῆρες ἀλῆται
> πλαγκτοσύνης καλέουσιν ἀρηγόνα Κυανοχαίτην.

Ἶρις ἀναγγέλλει τῷ Μενελάῳ τὰ γεγονότα κατὰ τὸν οἶκον. ὁ δὲ παραγενόμενος περὶ τῆς ἐπ' Ἴλιον στρατείας βουλεύεται μετὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ (Iris next informs Menelaus of what has happened at his home. Menelaus returns and plans an expedition against Ilium with his brother). It is notable that Iris should form the catalyst for the Indian War.

[109] Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 40–4 (*EGF* pp. 31–2): ἔπειτα τοὺς ἡγεμόνας ἀθροίζουσιν ἐπελθόντες τὴν Ἑλλάδα . . . καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα συνελθόντες εἰς Αὐλίδα θύουσι (Then they travel over Hellas and gather the leaders . . . All the leaders then meet together at Aulis and sacrifice); Apollod. *Epit.* 3.11: συνηθροίζετο δὲ ὁ στρατὸς ἐν Αὐλίδι (The armament mustered in Aulis). Whereas in the *Cypria* forces are assembled solely from Greece, the *Dionysiaca* emphasizes the global significance of its subject by mustering troops from all over the world, Europe and Asia alike.

[110] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.11: οἱ δὲ στρατεύσαντες ἐπὶ Τροίαν ἦσαν οἵδε (The men who went to the Trojan War were as follows . . .).

(But the heroic breed of farscattered champions, the hairy Satyrs, the blood of the Centaur tribe, the bushyknee ancient and his phalanx of Seilenoi, the regiment of Bassarids—do you sing me these, O Corybantic Muses! For I could not tell so many peoples with ten tongues, not if I had ten mouths pouring a voice of brass, all those which Bacchus gathered for his spearchasing. Yet I will loudly name their leaders, and I will call to my aid Homer, the one great harbour of language undefiled, since mariners lost astray call on Seabluehair to save them from their wandering ways.)

[13.43–52]

Homer himself had made a similar prayer before embarking upon his catalogue of ships,[111] but whereas he had called for the inspiration of the Muses, Nonnus calls upon both the Muses and Homer himself. The invocation of Homer is thus itself presented in terms of an Homeric allusion. Nonnus' literary playfulness does not stop there. Recent criticism of this passage has not noticed the ironic relevance of Nonnus' nautical allusion:[112] the ship of poetry is, of course, a common conceit,[113] yet Homer is designated a harbour for wandering sailors at least in part in order to remind us of the maritime nature of his own catalogue, a clear contrast with Nonnus' landlocked account.[114]

In the *Iliad*, a roll-call of Greek troops is followed by a shorter list of the enemy forces. Nonnus follows his initial catalogue of heroes with a further muster of divinities [14.15–16]: ἀλλὰ μετὰ βροτέην προμάχων ἡρωίδα φύτλην / καὶ στρατιὴν ζαθέην με διδάξατε, Φοιβάδες αὖραι (Now once more you breaths of Phoebus, after the tale of mortal heroes and warriors teach me also the host divine). This double catalogue both parallels the Iliadic structure[115] and 'caps' it: the appearance of mortal *and* divine catalogues gestures towards the superiority of Nonnus' Dionysiac Cycle.[116]

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[111] *Il.* 2.484–93.

[112] Cf. Chuvin (1991) 29–144, Vian (1995); Hopkinson (1994b) 27–8.

[113] Vian (1995) *ad loc.*

[114] A further example of Nonnus' verbal playfulness may be located in the description of Homer as ὅλον ὅρμον [13.51]. As Hopkinson (1994b) 40 n. 111 observes, 'ὅρμον implies capaciousness': Homer—Ὅμηρον [13.50]—is in fact so capacious that he is able to enclose a whole harbour within his name.

[115] Hopkinson (1994b) 28: 'if Book 13 begins Nonnus' *Indiad*, then the two catalogues are so placed as to recall the structure of the *Iliad*'. Nonnus will go on to give a separate account of the enemy forces in Book 26. The double catalogue might also allude to the fact that there were *two* assemblies at Aulis; see Apollod. *Epit.* 3.11–22; Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 55–6 (*EGF* p. 32): καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἠθροισμένου τοῦ στόλου ἐν Αὐλίδι (For a second time the army mustered at Aulis).

[116] It is important to remember that Nonnus' imitation of the Iliadic catalogue

2. *The phoney war*

a) *Skirmish*

The Bacchic and Indian troops are now ready to face each other [14.323ff.]. Fighting begins beside lake Astacis and the Indians sustain heavy losses. Dionysus achieves an easy and comprehensive victory by pouring wine into the water of the lake, thereby drugging his thirsty enemy [14.411ff.]. There follow two digressive books which relate the story of Hymnus and Nicaea, and Nicaea's subsequent seduction by Dionysus [15–16]. On the face of it, these two books would seem to bear little relation to the narrative schema of the Trojan Cycle. However, it may be noteworthy that 'narrative digression' was a marked feature of the *Cypria*. As Proclus' summary reveals [*Cypriorum enarratio* 36–9 (*EGF* p. 31)]: Νέστωρ δὲ ἐν παρεκβάσει διηγεῖται αὐτῷ ὡς Ἐπωπεὺς φθείρας τὴν Λυκούργου θυγατέρα ἐξεπορθήθη, καὶ τὰ περὶ Οἰδίπουν καὶ τὴν Ἡρακλέους μανίαν καὶ τὰ περὶ Θησέα καὶ Ἀριάδνην (Nestor in a digression tells him [sc. Menelaus] how Epopeus was utterly destroyed after seducing the daughter of Lycurgus, and the story of Oedipus, the madness of Heracles, and the story of Theseus and Ariadne).

In Book 17 Dionysus turns his mind back to war and continues his advance through the cities of Asia. He will not in fact reach India 'proper' and the city of Deriades until Book 25. With these opening books of the Indian War we might compare the adventures of the Greek army prior to the last year of the Trojan campaign.[117] We recall that the Greeks, setting sail from Aulis for the first time, ravaged the city of Mysia, thinking that it was Troy.[118] A parallel deception occurs in Book 14. Dionysus trounces the enemy, and seems to have put an end to the Indian War, almost before it has started. When the war narrative begins again in Book 17, it becomes

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does not mark the beginning of his full-scale engagement with Homer's epic. Homer's catalogue of ships belongs properly to the assembly at Aulis, and has been cleverly transplanted into the story of the *Iliad* (and the final year of the Iliadic campaign). Nonnus' Dionysiac Cycle seeks to restore the 'original' chronological sequence of the Trojan War, by putting the 'Aulis assembly' back into its proper place. The Dionysiac narrative still has six more years of fighting to account for before it can begin to engage directly with the narrative of the *Iliad*.

[117] Vian (1991a) 7.

[118] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.17: ἀγνοοῦντες δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ Τροίαν πλοῦν Μυσίᾳ προσίσχουσι καὶ ταύτην ἐπόρθουν, Τροίαν νομίζοντες εἶναι (But not knowing the course to steer for Troy, they put in to Mysia and ravaged it, supposing it to be Troy); Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 47–8 (*EGF* p. 32): ἔπειτα ἀναχθέντες Τευθρανίᾳ προσίσχουσι καὶ ταύτην ὡς Ἴλιον ἐπόρθουν (Then they set sail and landed at Teuthrania, and they sacked it, under the impression that it was Ilion).

obvious that the battle at the lake was only a rehearsal for the 'real' Indian War against Deriades, which remains to be fought. As Mysia deceived the Greeks, so the battle of Lake Astacis may deceive readers of the *Dionysiaca.*

b) *Embassy*

When the Greeks did finally reach the Troad, Odysseus and Menelaus were sent out on an embassy to demand the return of Helen and her property.[119] So in Nonnus' account, Pherespondes is sent out to deliver a message to King Deriades [18.316–19]: ὦ τέκος Ἑρμάωνος, ἐμοὶ πεφιλημένε κῆρυξ, / τοῦτο μολὼν ἄγγειλον ἀγήνορι Δηριαδῆι· / "κοίρανε, νόσφι μάχης ἢ δέχνυσο δῶρα Λυαίου, / ἢ Βρομίῳ πτολέμιζε καὶ ἔσσεαι ἶσος Ὀρόντῃ" (Son of Hermaon, herald that I love, go take this message to proud Deriades: 'Prince, accept the gifts of Lyaius without war, or fight against Bromius and you shall be like Orontes!').[120] The Greek demand for the *return* of Helen has here been transformed into a demand for the *acceptance* of the vine. In Nonnus' account, however, it is not until 21.200ff. that the messenger delivers his demand that Deriades either accept the gift of wine or suffer the consequences of war. The division of Nonnus' embassy scene into two stages has an important narrative function, creating a frame around the Lycurgus episode. At this point Nonnus is attempting to reconcile material from the specific narrative of Dionysus, and the wider narrative of the mythological cycle. Just as the Greek embassy forms an early part of the story of the Trojan War, so the episode of Lycurgus forms an early part of the story of Dionysus in India. In order to interpose existing material from the narrative of Dionysus into the narrative of the Trojan Cycle, Nonnus has divided the embassy scene into two parts.

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[119] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.28: ἀναχθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Τενέδου προσέπλεον Τροίᾳ, καὶ πέμπουσιν Ὀδυσσέα καὶ Μενέλαον τὴν Ἑλένην καὶ τὰ χρήματα ἀπαιτοῦντας (Putting to sea from Tenedos they made sail for Troy, and sent Odysseus and Menelaus to demand the restoration of Helen and the property); Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 72–3 (*EGF* p. 32): καὶ διαπρεσβεύονται πρὸς τοὺς Τρῶας, τὴν Ἑλένην καὶ τὰ κτήματα ἀπαιτοῦντες (They make representation to the Trojans, demanding the restoration of Helen and the property).

[120] Vian (1991a) 8–9: 'ambasciata achea a Troia = fallimento dell' ambasciata di Ferespondo presso Deriade (XVIII, XXI)'.

c) *Passage to India*

According to Apollodorus, it was only after the embassy has failed that the Greeks attempt to land their ships.[121] Nonnus enacts a similar plan: after the failure of the embassy Dionysiac forces cross the river Hydaspes [22–24], and enter the territory of India 'proper'.[122] As a result of the Greek landing, the Trojans retreated into their city; so began the siege of Troy.[123] Similarly, after Dionysus has crossed the Hydaspes, the Indians retreat within the walls [24.176–8]: Ἰνδοὶ δ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα σὺν ἠλιβάτῳ βασιλῆι / εἰς πόλιν ἐρρώοντο πεφυζότες ἔνδοθι πύργων, / νίκην εἰσαΐοντες ἀρειμανέος Διονύσου (Along with their gigantic king, the Indians everywhere made haste to take refuge in the city, hearing behind their walls of the victory of war-mad Dionysus). Nonnus goes on to describe the scene of mourning inside the enemy city. One figure in particular captures our attention, a bride lamenting the loss of her new husband [24.192–4]: ἄλλη ποικιλόδακρυς ἀνεστεναχίζετο νύμφη / νυμφίον ἀρτιχόρευτον ἐοικότα Πρωτεσιλάῳ, / ἄλλη Λαοδάμεια (There was a bride bathed in tears lamenting her bridegroom lately wedded with dancing, another Laodameia with her Protesilaus). The allusion makes a clear connection between parallel stages in the Trojan and Indian Wars: Protesilaus, as both Apollodorus and Proclus remind us, was the very first of all the Greek warriors to fall at Troy, right at the beginning of the expedition.[124] In Nonnus' version Protesilaus now makes an appearance in the early stages of the Indian War. This time, however, he has swapped sides and 'become' an Indian/Trojan hero.

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[121] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.29–33; Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 73–6 (*EGF* p. 32): ὡσ δὲ οὐχ ὑπήκουσαν ἐκεῖνοι, ἐνταῦθα δὴ τειχομαχοῦσι. ἔπειτα τὴν χώραν ἐπεξελθόντες πορθοῦσι καὶ τὰς περιοίκους πόλεις (The Trojans refusing, they first assault the city, and then go out and lay waste the country and cities round about).

[122] Vian (1991a) 7–8: 'sbarco nella Troade = attraversamento dell' Idaspe e arrivo in India (XXII–XXIV)'.

[123] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.31.

[124] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.30: τῶν δὲ Ἑλλήνων πρῶτος ἀπέβη τῆς νεὼς Πρωτεσίλαος, καὶ κτείνας οὐκ ὀλίγους τῶν βαρβάρων ὑφ' Ἕκτορος θνήσκει. τούτου ἡ γυνὴ Λαοδάμεια καὶ μετὰ θάνατον ἤρα, καὶ ποιήσασα εἴδωλον Πρωτεσιλάῳ παραπλήσιον τούτῳ προσωμίλει (Of the Greeks the first to land from his ship was Protesilaus, and having slain not a few of the barbarians he fell by the hand of Hector. His wife Laodameia loved him even after his death, and she made an image of him and consorted with it); cf. Proclus, *Cypriorum enarratio* 68–9 (*EGF* p. 32): ἔπειτα ἀποβαίνοντας αὐτοὺς εἰς Ἴλιον εἴργουσιν οἱ Τρῶες, καὶ θνῄσκει Πρωτεσίλαος ὑφ' Ἕκτορος (Then the Greeks try to land at Ilium, but the Trojans prevent them and Protesilaus is killed by Hector); cf. Paus. 4.2.7.

The scenes of distress in the Indian city contrast markedly with the celebrations in the Dionysiac camp [24.218–23]: ἀμφὶ δὲ λόχμας / Βάκχος ἑοῖς Σατύροισι καὶ Ἰνδοφόνοισι μαχηταῖς / εἰλαπίνην ἔστησεν. ἐδαιτρεύοντο δὲ ταῦροι, / καὶ δαμάλαι στοιχηδὸν ἐμιστύλλοντο μαχαίρῃ / θεινόμεναι πελέκεσσιν, Ἐρυθραίης τ' ἀπὸ ποίμνης / πυκνὰ δορικτήτων ἱερεύετο πώεα μήλων (But in the forest, Bacchus held a feast with his Satyrs and Indian-slaying warriors: bulls were slaughtered, rows of heifers were struck with axes and cut up with knives, whole flocks of sheep were killed from the captured Erythraian herds). The reference to the stolen livestock connects neatly with an incident from the mythological cycle where Achilles drives off the cattle of Aeneas.[125] It is not unlikely that the cattle stolen by Achilles were consumed during a celebratory feast, which the summaries have neglected to mention.

If the mythological cycle did indeed include a celebratory feast at this point, it may well have been accompanied by the singing of a bard, such as we read of in Nonnus' narrative [24.230–1]: τοῖσι δὲ τερπομένοισι παρὰ κρητῆρα λιγαίνων / Λέσβιος αὐτοδίδακτος ἀνέπλεκε Λεῦκος ἀοιδήν (So they rejoiced, while Leucus the selftaught Lesbian singer wove his lay beside the mixing-bowl). The representation of Leucus and his songs owes a clear debt to Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8, but the ultimate source for the 'weaving of Aphrodite' remains unknown.[126] The double reference to Cyprus at the beginning of the song remains enigmatic.[127] It is an inhabitant of that same island who first asks for the story of the 'weaving of Aphrodite' [24.237–40]: Κυπριάδος δὲ Λάπηθος ἀτευχέος ἀστὸς ἀρούρης / ἔμφρονι φορμικτῆρι παρέζετο . . . / . . . καὶ ᾔτεε κεῖνον ἀείδειν / τερπνὸν ἀσιγήτοισι μεμηλότα μῦθον Ἀθήναις (Lapethus, a dweller in the unarmed Cyprian land, sat next to the inspired minstrel . . . begging him to sing a pleasant story that never-silent Athens loves). At his request, the bard strikes up his song about the goddess Cypris [24.242]: αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο Κύπριν ἀείδειν . . . (So he struck up his song and began

[125] Proclus *Cypriorum enarratio* 80 (*EGF* p. 32): κἄπειτα ἀπελαύνει τὰς Αἰνείου βόας (Next he drives away the cattle of Aeneas); Apollod. *Epit.* 3.32; cf. *Il.* 20.90–2: ἀλλ' ἤδη με καὶ ἄλλοτε δουρὶ φόβησεν / ἐξ Ἴδης, ὅτε βουσὶν ἐπήλυθεν ἡμετέρῃσι, / πέρσε δὲ Λυρνησσὸν καὶ Πήδασον (Once before he chased me with his spear from Ida, when he raided our cattle and sacked Lyrnessus and Pedasus).

[126] See Hopkinson (1994a) 155–62; (1994b) 21–2.

[127] Chuvin (1991) 98–9 suggests that the story may originally have come from Cyprus; Hopkinson (1994a) 156 n. 2 remains unconvinced.

to sing of Cypris . . .). It is certainly natural for a Cyprian to ask for a song about Cypris,[128] but what is the specific point of the emphasis in Book 24? In the original Epic Cycle, the story of the arrival at Troy was told in the *Cypria*. Although it is extremely unlikely that Nonnus had access to this poem in its original form, he was no doubt aware of its contents from mythological handbooks and summaries. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Nonnus has chosen to mark the end of his own 'version' of the *Cypria* with a deliberate allusion to Cyprus and Cypris.[129]

The Dionysiac Cycle has reached another significant staging post. Books 1–12 proceeded from the beginnings of Greek mythology through to the birth and adolescence of Achilles. Books 13–24 took up the story of Achilles, or more precisely, the story in which Achilles played such a prominent part: the Trojan War. Mythological tradition preserves the record of nine years of fighting before the fateful quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon which formed the starting point of Homer's *Iliad*. . . It is those first nine years—the 'pre-Homeric' story—which has been Nonnus' primary concern throughout Books 13–24. This is the narrative which Nonnus has recreated—from Zeus's plan for war and the assembly of the troops, through to the arrival in the territory of the enemy. It is only now—twelve books into the Indian War that Nonnus is ready to engage with the next part of the mythological cycle: the Iliadic narrative of Homer.

The Cycle of Dionysus III: The Indiad [25–40]

At the beginning of Book 25 the poet talks candidly about the structure of his narrative. Having described the first year of the Indian War, he will now relate the final year of fighting [25.6–10]: οὐ μὲν ἀείσω / πρώτους ἑξ λυκάβαντας, ὅτε στρατὸς ἔνδοθι πύργων / Ἰνδὸς

[128] Hopkinson (1994a) *ad loc.*

[129] This possibility raises a further point of interest concerning the title of the *Cypria* itself. Its name may relate to the island where its author lived, or possibly to the prominent role of Aphrodite within the poem (Davis (1989) 33). Perhaps a solution could be found which embraces both of these suggestions: a poet from Cyprus may have alluded to his island's patron goddess within the epic itself. In this case, the Cyprian song at the end of Book 24 might refer us not only to the eponymous poem, but more specifically to a scene within the poem, where a bard is asked to sing about Cypris.

ἔην· τελέσας δὲ τύπον μιμηλὸν Ὁμήρου / ὕστατον ὑμνήσω πολέμων ἔτος, ἑβδομάτης δέ / ὑσμίνην ἰσάριθμον ἐμῆς στρουθοῖο χαράξω (I will not sing the first six years, while the Indian army remained behind walls; I will make my pattern like Homer's and sing the last year of warfare, I will describe that which has the number of my seventh sparrow).[130] What is announced here is a new order of Homeric allusion. Until now individual Homeric scenes and allusions have been used by Nonnus to support and complement the early part of the Indian War. The 'assembly of troops' [Books 13–14] relies heavily on the catalogue of ships in *Iliad* 2, just as the 'crossing of the Hydaspes' [Books 21–4] borrows much from *Iliad* 21. In Book 25 the Dionysiac Cycle finally 'catches up' with the narrative of the *Iliad.* Books 25–40 will represent not merely a borrowing of isolated Iliadic scenes, but the large-scale reworking, and recontextualisation, of the *Iliad* into the wider narrative of the *Dionysiaca.*

To many critics, the *Indiad*—as we may wish to describe these books[131]—resembles nothing more than a hodge-podge of Homeric imitation, a chaotic Iliadic pastiche which is largely unrelated to the sequence of events as they unfold in the Iliadic narrative. As Hopkinson notes, '[i]t is clear that Nonnus is not concerned to reproduce the order of events in the *Iliad,* but to use well known scenes in new contexts'.[132] But as I hope to demonstrate, Nonnus is concerned not to create a mélange of Iliadic allusion, but to write a Dionysiac version of the *Iliad,* which refers very closely to the structure of the Homeric narrative. The following section will undertake a detailed examination of the way in which Nonnus adapts and incorporates the narrative of the *Iliad* into his own Dionysiac narrative. This is not a slight and careless reworking but a sustained and thoughtful attempt to rewrite the whole of the *Iliad* in a new Dionysiac form.

Many of the Homeric allusions detailed in the following account have already been noted by critics, most especially by the com-

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[130] Vian (1991a) 7–8: 'assedio di nove anni = assedio di sei anni (segnalato nel canto XXV)'.

[131] We must be careful here in our use of this word. Modern critics frequently use the term *Indiad* in order to gloss the whole Indian War, from Books 13–40. This shorthand is convenient and not infelicitous—Nonnus' 'Indian War' can indeed be read as his targeted response to Homer's *Iliad.* Yet the term is potentially misleading. As we have seen, Books 13–24 rework the narrative not of the *Iliad,* but of the Antehomeric tradition. Nonnus' reworking of the Iliadic framework does not properly commence until Book 25, as the poet himself is at pains to point out [25.6–10].

[132] Hopkinson (1994b) 37 n. 65.

mentators in the Budé series. However, little attempt has been made to consider the matrix of Homeric allusion in Books 25–40 as a whole, to consider Nonnus' *sustained* engagement with the narrative of the *Iliad.* This section will, therefore, attempt to remedy this shortfall; it will offer a detailed account of the way in which Nonnus engages with the narrative of the *Iliad* through sixteen books of the *Dionysiaca.* Much will seem obvious, even simplistic, in this continuous 'reading' of Nonnus' *Indiad*; it is nevertheless a reading which I believe to be vital for our further understanding of Nonnus' allusive engagement with Homer.

The relationship between Nonnus' *Indiad* and Homer's *Iliad* may be illustrated at the start of our investigation by the following table:

D. 25	*Il.* 1
D. 26	*Il.* 2
D. 27	*Il.* 3
D. 29	*Il.* 4–5
D. 30	*Il.* 6–8
D. 31–5	*Il.* 14–15
D. 36	*Il.* 20
D. 37	*Il.* 23
D. 39	*Il.* 21
D. 40	*Il.* 22–4

1. *Preliminary hostilities*

a) *First and last*

Before we can reach the territory of the Iliadic narrative, a transition must be made from the first year of the war to the last. This is achieved via a close reworking of the prelude of Triphiodorus' *Sack of Troy,* which summarized the main events of the Trojan war up to the beginning of the final year.[133] At the end of the prelude Helenus prophesies the destruction of Troy and encourages the Greeks to put an end to their long toil [Triph. 45–50]. This is paralleled in Nonnus' account by the arrival of Attis at 25.310ff.[134] Just as Helenus predicts the fall of Troy—[Triph. 48] . . . ὀψιτέλεστον ὄλεθρον ἑῇ μαντεύσατο πάτρῃ (. . . he prophesied the late-fulfilled ruin of his own fatherland)—so Attis tells Dionysus about Rhea's prophecy

[133] Vian (1990) 30–1 provides a detailed list of correspondences; see also Vian (1991a) 8.

[134] Vian (1990) 31.

of victory for him [25.361–2]: . . . ὅττι κυδοιμοῦ / νίκην <u>ὀψιτέλεστον</u> ἐμὴ <u>μαντεύσατο</u> Ῥείη (. . . for my Rheia has prophesied victory for you at last). After the prophecy, Triphiodorus moves off into his narrative of the Wooden Horse and the fall of Troy. The prophecy of Rhea has a similarly dramatic effect on Nonnus' narrative (though with inevitably different consequences): Nonnus moves off into the early stages of his Indiadic campaign and sends Dionysus into the battlefield.

b) *Best of the heroes*

Book 25 is both a book of transition and also, in general terms, the introduction to Nonnus' *Indiad*. As the *Iliad* opens with a direct invocation of the Muse—[*Il.* 1.1]: θεά—so too begins Book 25 [25.1]: Μοῦσα.[135] The first book of the *Iliad* relates the consequences of an argument between Achilles and Agamemnon about who is the best of the Achaeans. The *Indiad* begins in analogous manner with a *syncrisis*, a rhetorical argument which attempts to demonstrate the superiority of Dionysus over other heroes [25.27–30]: ἀλλὰ νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων, / εὐκαμάτους ἱδρῶτας ἀναστήσω Διονύσου, / κρίνων ἠνορέην τεκέων Διός, ὄφρα νοήσω / τίς κάμε τοῖον ἀγῶνα, τίς εἴκελος ἔπλετο Βάκχῳ (But I will set up the toils and sweat of Dionysus in rivalry with both new and old; I will judge the manhood of the sons of Zeus, and see who endured such an encounter, who was comparable to Bacchus).

c) *Shield of Dionysus*

The most curious part of this first book of Nonnus' *Indiad* is the shield ecphrasis with which it concludes, a lengthy imitation of the 'shield of Achilles' in *Iliad* 18.[136] It points towards the end of the *Iliad* and not its beginning, and seems rather to support the view that Nonnus is not concerned to reproduce the order of Iliadic events. In fact, the presence of the shield ecphrasis is not as intrusive as it appears, and its presentation is not unmotivated.[137] As divine armour is provided for Achilles, in order that he may return to the battlefield

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[135] The invocation recalls the proem of Book 1 and hints at the division of the epic into two clear halves. See Vian (1976) xxiii–xxiv. At 25.264 Nonnus reinvokes the Muse in explicitly Iliadic terms, as θεά.

[136] Vian (1990) 33–6; Hopkinson (1994b) 22–4.

[137] Hopkinson (1994b) 23 comments on the '*unmotivated* presentation of the shield by Attis' [my emphasis].

after a long absence, so the gift of the shield precipitates Dionysus' own (long overdue) return to arms. The shield also provides motivation for Nonnus' re-entry into the narrative. It gives the impression that Nonnus really has been armed with Homer's shield, in ironic fulfilment of the prayer he made at 25.264–5: ἀλλά, θεά, με κόμιζε τὸ δεύτερον ἐς μέσον Ἰνδῶν, / ἔμπνοον ἔγχος ἔχοντα καὶ ἀσπίδα πατρὸς Ὁμήρου (Then bring me, O goddess, into the midst of the Indians again, holding the inspired spear and shield of father Homer). This shield ecphrasis stands in prominent position at the beginning of the *Indiad*, as a pledge, a sampler[138] of the full-scale imitation that is to follow. The foregrounding of mimetic endeavour heightens our expectations about the forthcoming narrative, and raises speculation as to how (for example) Nonnus will deal with the pivotal μῆνις of Achilles. It is one thing to imitate an Homeric scene, but quite another to reformulate the entire narrative of the *Iliad.*

d) *Dream of Dionysus*

By Book 26 the transition to the final year of the war and the Iliadic narrative has been perfected. We are able to locate ourselves within the allusive frame of the *Iliad.* Book 2 of the *Iliad* begins with a false dream sent by Zeus to Agamemnon, urging him to take the field against the Trojans [*Il.* 2.23–5]: εὕδεις, Ἀτρέος υἱὲ δαΐφρονος ἱπποδάμοιο· / οὐ χρὴ παννύχιον εὕδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα, / ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται, καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε (You sleep, son of battle-minded Atreus, tamer of horses. A man that is a counselor must not sleep the whole night through, one to whom an army has been entrusted, and on whom rest so many cares). The second book of Nonnus' *Indiad* begins in a similar way with a false dream sent by Athena to stir up Deriades to action [26.10–12]:[139] εὕδεις, Δηριάδη· σὲ δὲ μέμφομαι· ἀστυόχων γάρ / πάννυχον ὕπνον ἔχειν ἀλλότριόν ἐστιν ἀνάκτων· / ὕπνου μέτρον ἔχει βουληφόρος (You sleep, Deriades, but I blame you: for it is not proper that princes who rule a city should sleep all the night. The sleep of the Counsellor is measured). Nonnus continues to follow the pattern of *Iliad* 2: his description of the Indian troops fighting on the side

[138] A metaphor borrowed from Hopkinson (1994b) 21, from his discussion of 'the weaving of Aphrodite'.

[139] Vian (1990) 69: 'Nonnos vient de se proclamer l'émule et le rival d'Homère. Il marche aussitôt sur ses traces en modelant le second chant de son 'Indiade' sur le schéma du ch. II de l'*Iliade*'. Elsewhere (e.g. 1994a *passim*) Vian uses 'Indiade' in a looser sense to designate Books 13–40.

of Deriades [26.38–378] alludes to the Homeric catalogue of Trojan forces [*Il.* 2.816–77].[140] His imitation of Homer's Greek catalogue in Books 13–14 was so positioned and contrived as to recall the assembly at Aulis; this later imitation now reminds us of the arrival of new Trojan allies after nine years of fighting.[141]

e) *Council of the Gods*

In Book 27 the opposing forces march out and meet each other on the battlefield, just as they do at *Iliad* 3.1ff.[142] Nonnus does not attempt to reproduce the duel between Paris and Menelaus (there is no equivalent 'Helen of India' to motivate such a scene); instead he provides long exhortatory speeches for both Deriades [27.22–135] and Dionysus [27.167–220].[143] As the troops first oppose each other, we move to Olympus, where the gods are assembled in council [27.241–3]: καὶ πάντες ὅσοι ναετῆρες Ὀλύμπου, / Ζηνὶ παρεδριόωντες ἔσω θεοδέγμονος αὐλῆς, / πασσυδὸν ἠγορόωντο πολυχρύσων ἐπὶ θώκων (All the inhabitants of Olympus were sitting with Zeus in his god-welcoming hall, gathered in full company on golden thrones). The allusion is clearly to the feast and assembly of the gods at the beginning of *Iliad* 4 [*Il.* 4.1–4]: οἱ δὲ θεοὶ πὰρ Ζηνὶ καθήμενοι ἠγορόωντο / χρυσέῳ ἐν δαπέδῳ, μετὰ δέ σφισι πότνια Ἥβη / νέκταρ ἐῳνοχόει, τοὶ δὲ χρυσέοις δεπάεσσι / δειδέχατ' ἀλλήλους, Τρώων πόλιν εἰσορόωντες (Now the gods, seated by the side of Zeus, were holding assembly upon the golden floor, and among them the queenly Hebe poured them nectar, and they with golden goblets pledged each other as they looked out on the city of the Trojans). Nonnus leaves the reader in no doubt about the Iliadic resonance, since he follows up his general allusion with an explicit reference to the Trojan War [27.244–8]: τοῖσι δὲ δαινυμένοισιν ἀπὸ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσων / εὐχαίτης γλυκὺ νέκταρ ἐῳνοχόει Γανυμήδης. / οὐ τότε γὰρ Τρώεσσιν Ἀχαιικὸς ἔβρεμεν ἄρης, / ὡς πάρος ὄφρα κύπελλα πάλιν μακάρεσσι κεράσσῃ / Ἥβη καλλιέθειρα

[140] Vian (1991a) 7–8: 'catalogo dei Troiani e dei loro alleati = catalogo delle truppe di Deriade e dei suoi alleati (XXVI)'. The position of the two sets of catalogues forms a frame which neatly encloses the Antehomeric section of the Indian War.

[141] Apollod. *Epit.* 3.34: ἐνναετοῦς δὲ χρόνου διελθόντος παραγίνονται τοῖς Τρωσὶ σύμμαχοι· ἐκ τῶν περιοίκων πόλεων (A period of nine years having elapsed, allies came to join the Trojans from the surrounding cities . . .).

[142] Vian (1991a) 7–8: '*Iliade* propriamente detta = Indiade propriamente detta (dal canto XXVII all'inizio del canto XL)'.

[143] Vian (1990) 115: 'Son plan est d'une grande simplicité: le poète se borne à développer avec une ampleur inusité un schéma scolaire des préliminaires de combat'.

(as they feasted, fair-hair Ganymedes drew delicious nectar from the mixing-bowl and carried it round. For then there was no noise of Achaean war for the Trojans as once there was, that Hebe with her lovely hair might again mix the cups for the immortals).

f) *Breaking of the truce*

After the council in Book 27, the gods descend to earth to help their favourites in battle [27.331ff.]. There follows a detailed account of the fighting between the two sides [28.1ff.] which suggests little specific Homeric resonance. However, specific allusion is soon reprised in Book 29, where Nonnus reworks the 'breaking of the truce' from *Iliad* 4. There Pandarus the archer is encouraged by Athena to shoot at Menelaus and so break the truce [*Il.* 4.100]: ἀλλ' ἄγ' ὀίστευσον Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο (But come, shoot your arrow at glorious Menelaus). In Nonnus' version, an unnamed Indian urges the archer Melaneus[144] to fire an arrow at Dionysus [29.54]: ἀλλὰ βέλος προΐαλλε μινυνθαδίῳ Διονύσῳ (Come aim a shot at short-lived Dionysus). Zeus notices what has happened and causes the arrow to swerve towards the thigh of Dionysus' lover Hymenaeus [29.75–7]; and Dionysus himself softens the force of the missile before it strikes the boy. Aphrodite also plays a part, by brushing away the arrow [29.82–6]: καὶ Παφίη γλωχῖνας ἀπηκόντιζε βελέμνου, / σύγγονος ἱμείροντι χαριζομένη Διονύσῳ, / καὶ βέλος ἔτραπε τόσσον ἀπὸ χροός, ὡς ὅτε μήτηρ / παιδὸς ἔτι κνώσσοντος ἀλήμονα μυῖαν ἐλάσσῃ, / ἠρέμα φάρεος ἄκρον ἐπαιθύσσουσα προσώπῳ (The Paphian too brushed away the barbs of the shaft, in grace to a sister's love of Dionysus her brother, and kept the shot just out of the flesh, as when a mother drives off a vagrant fly from her sleeping child, fanning his face with a corner of her robe). This particularly striking simile 'originally' described the way that Athena brushed the arrow away from the flesh of Menelaus [*Il.* 4.130–1]: ὡς ὅτε μήτηρ / παιδὸς ἐέργῃ μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἡδέι λέξεται ὕπνῳ . . . (as a mother sweeps a fly from her child when he lies in sweet slumber). Nonnus has elaborated the brief Homeric simile. Of special interest is the appearance of Aphrodite here. In the previous lines Dionysus plays the part of Athena, softening the impact of the arrow. Since it would be incongruous, however, for Dionysus to be compared to a mother brushing the flies off her

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[144] The verbal correspondence between Μενέλαος and Μελανεύς helps to reinforce the broader correspondence between the two scenes.

sleeping baby,[145] Nonnus provides a creative solution to the 'problem' by introducing an appropriate female figure into his narrative, viz. Aphrodite.[146]

The fighting that follows the wounding of Hymenaeus parallels in general the eruption of violence after the wounding of Menelaus (though the descriptions employed in these battle-scenes are made up from a range of Iliadic allusions, which add atmosphere without evoking specific points of reference). The day's fighting is brought to an end when the evening star begins to rise [29.323–4]. Rhea now sends a deceptive dream to Ares, which stimulates his departure from the battlefield and sees him return to Olympus [29.379]: ἔδραμε καὶ μετὰ Λῆμνον ἐς οὐρανόν . . . (Then he left Lemnos and rose into heaven). This scene has an analogue in *Iliad* 5 where Ares is driven from the battlefield, not by a dream but by the hero Diomedes (with the help of Athena) [*Il.* 5.866–7]: τοῖος Τυδεΐδῃ Διομήδεϊ χάλκεος Ἄρης / φαίνεθ' ὁμοῦ νεφέεσσιν, ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν (So to Diomedes son of Tydeus, did brazen Ares appear as he went among the broad clouds to heaven). In both narratives the field has now been cleared of divine participants.

g) *Changing fortunes*

Iliad 6–8 describe the changing fortunes of the heroes on the plains of Troy, now on this side and now on that. The thirtieth books of the *Dionysiaca* follows a similar pattern, with neither the Indians nor the troops of Dionysus gaining clear dominance. In the Iliadic narrative the balance is decisively disrupted by Zeus, who tilts the scales of war and gives ascendancy to the Trojans, in accordance with his plan to restore honour to Achilles [*Il.* 8.75–8]: αὐτὸς δ' ἐξ Ἴδης μεγάλ' ἔκτυπε, δαιόμενον δὲ / ἧκε σέλας μετὰ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν· οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες / θάμβησαν, καὶ πάντας ὑπὸ χλωρὸν δέος εἷλεν. / ἔνθ' οὔτ' Ἰδομενεὺς τλῆ μίμνειν, οὔτ' Ἀγαμέμνων . . . (Then himself he thundered aloud from Ida, and sent a blazing flash into the army of the Achaeans; and at the sight of it they were struck with wonder, and pale fear seized them all. Then neither Idomeneus dared remain, nor Agamemnon . . .). Likewise

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[145] Mr J. König points out that the comparison of Dionysus to an attentive mother need not be incongruous—since Dionysus is often presented as a very feminine kind of god.

[146] Dr P. R. Hardie suggests that the eroticism of the Nonnian reworking may hint at the implicit eroticism in the simile at *Il.* 4.141–7; see Fowler (1987) 190.

Hera turns the tide of the Indian War [30.231–4]: Ἥρη . . . / δῶκε μένος καὶ θάρσος ἀγήνορι Δηριαδῆι· / καί οἱ ἀριστεύοντι σελασφόρον ὤπασεν αἴγλην / εἰς φόβον ἀντιβίοισι (Hera . . . gave courage and spirit to lordly Deriades, and showed a brilliant glow upon his triumphant course for the terror of his foes); [30.240–1]: τὸν μὲν ἰδὼν Διόνυσος ἐθάμβεεν, οὐδέ οἱ ἔτλη / ἀντιάσαι (Dionysus was amazed when he saw and had not the heart to meet him).[147]

In the Iliadic account, the Trojans remain ascendant until the moment when Hera deceives Zeus and swings the battle back in favour of the Greeks in *Il.* 14. Before Nonnus can reproduce his own version of the Διὸς ἀπάτη, he must overcome a particular 'difficulty' in his adaptation of the Iliadic narrative. In the *Iliad* Hera fights on the side of the Greeks; it is precisely because the Trojans are being supported by Zeus in *Iliad* 8 that she contrives to deceive her husband and to tilt back the balance of war. In the *Dionysiaca* Hera has changed sides: she no longer supports the besieging (Dionysiac/Greek) army, but rather the besieged (Indian/Trojan). The reversal suffered by the Dionysiac/Greek force at 30.231ff. is thus a desirable outcome for Hera.[148] At this point, Nonnus' imitation of the Iliadic narrative threatens to run into difficulty. Hera's forces are already enjoying success on the battlefield, and it would be pointless (not to say illogical) for the goddess to contrive the deception of her husband. Nonnus' solution is not to abandon the Διὸς ἀπάτη, nor to introduce it as an unmotivated episode. Instead, he actively reverses the Dionysiac reversal and sends the Indians into retreat [30.325–6]: Ἰνδοὶ δ' ἀνδροφόνοιο μετεσσεύοντο κυδοιμοῦ / ἠνορέην τρομέοντες ἀνικήτου Διονύσου (The Indians retreated at last from the carnage of the battle, fearing the valour of unconquered Dionysus). In this way, a coherent and dynamic motivation is restored to Nonnus' forthcoming adaptation of the Διὸς ἀπάτη.

2. *Deception of Zeus*

When Hera looks out over the plains of India and sees her forces in disarray, she hatches an immediate plan [31.26–9]: ἤθελε δὲ Κρονίδαο καὶ ὄμματα καὶ φρένα θέλγειν / εἰς γάμον ἠπεροπῆα καὶ εἰς

[147] Athena rebukes the fleeing Dionysus with the same question that Diomedes uses to Odysseus [30.258 ~ *Il.* 8.94]: πῇ φεύγεις; (Where are you fleeing?).

[148] Motivated, as we have seen, by the goddess herself.

πτερὸν ἡδέος Ὕπνου / ἑλκομένου μετὰ λέκτρον, ὅπως δολίῃ τινὶ τέχνῃ / Ζηνὸς ἔτι κνώσσοντος ἐπιβρίσειε Λυαίῳ (And she purposed to enchant the eyes and heart of Cronides in deceitful love, under the wing of sweet sleep that is brought on after the bed, that while Zeus yet slumbered she might find some cunning trick to crush Lyaius). Here is a clear allusion to the Διὸς ἀπάτη in *Iliad* 14 [*Il.* 14.159–60]:[149] μερμήριξε δ' ἔπειτα βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη, / ὅππως ἐξαπάφοιτο Διὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο (Then ox-eyed queen Hera considered how she might distract the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus). The deception is soon set in motion. Hera instructs Iris to win Hypnus over to their cause [31.112–15]: σπεῦδε μολεῖν ζοφόεντος ἐς ἑσπέριον δόμον Ὕπνου· / δίζεο καὶ περὶ Λῆμνον ἁλίκτυπον· εἰ δέ μιν εὕρῃς, / λέξον, ἵνα Κρονίωνος ἀθελγέος ὄμματα θέλξῃ / εἰς μίαν ἠριγένειαν, ὅπως Ἰνδοῖσιν ἀρήξω (Hasten with stormshod foot to the gloomy home of Sleep in the west. Seek also about seagirt Lemnos, and if you find him tell him to charm the eyes of Zeus uncharmable for one day, that I may help the Indians). In *Iliad* 14 it is Hera herself who goes to see Hypnus [*Il.* 14.225ff.]. In both accounts Hypnus is bribed with the promise of marriage to the nymph Pasithea [31.121–2; *Il.* 14.267–9]. Nonnus' Hypnus, however, is the more easily persuaded of the two, and accepts Hera's command without demur.

In Homer's account, Hera's visit to Hypnus takes place after she has borrowed the cestus from Aphrodite; Nonnus reverses the order. Moreover, the element of deception which is present in Hera's 'original' speech to Aphrodite [*Il.* 14.197ff.] is quite absent from Nonnus' version, where Hera declares her plans without pretence [31.271–4]. Armed with Aphrodite's cestus and having attended to her toilet,[150] Hera goes off to see her husband [32.38ff.]. She makes up a spurious story that she has just returned from an urgent matter of cosmic business [32.48–58; cf. *Il.* 14.301–11]. Zeus is overcome with desire, as he reveals in no uncertain terms [32.62]: ἀμφοτέρους δὲ γαμήλια λέκτρα δεχέσθω (But let a bridebed receive us both).[151] He has never felt like this before—not with Taygete, nor Niobe, nor Io nor . . . [32.62–75].[152]

[149] See Vian (1997b) 39–59, 75–100; and notes *ad loc.*

[150] This scene, which Homer narrates before the visit to Aphrodite, is placed by Nonnus after it.

[151] A clear reworking of *Il.* 14.314: νῶϊ δ', ἄγ', ἐν φιλότητι τραπείομεν εὐνηθέντε (But for us two, come, let us take our joy bedded together in love).

[152] A reworking of Homer's Zeus who has also never felt like this before: not with the wife of Ixion, nor with Danae, nor Europa . . . [*Il.* 14.315–28].

Zeus makes love with his wife and is then lulled to sleep. It is at this point in the Iliadic narrative that Hypnus descends to earth to inform Poseidon of the deception, and thus allow the Greeks to gain the upper hand in battle [*Il.* 14.354ff.]. In Nonnus' account, it is the Fury Megaera who descends to earth and turns the tide of battle in favour of the Indians [32.98ff.]. Our description of Nonnus' Διὸς ἀπάτη has so far failed to mention this Fury. Before the visits to either Hypnus or Aphrodite, Hera takes a trip to the Underworld to consult with Persephone [31.30ff.]. The queen of the Dead provides the queen of Olympus with Megaera, who is to spring into action once Zeus has been lulled to sleep. In contrast to the Iliadic Hypnus, who waits in a pine tree in the guise of a mountain thrush [*Il.* 14.286–91], the Nonnian Megaera waits in a cave in the form of an owl.

And so, while Zeus sleeps in the arms of his wife, Megaera drives Dionysus mad[153] and causes him to wander from the field of battle [32.98ff.]. At a parallel moment in the *Iliad*, Hector is wounded by Ajax and carried away from battle [*Il.* 14.402ff.]. His retreat gives great encouragement to the Greek troops [*Il.* 14.440–1]: Ἀργεῖοι δ' ὡς οὖν ἴδον Ἕκτορα νόσφι κιόντα, / μᾶλλον ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι θόρον, μνήσαντο δὲ χάρμης (But when the Argives saw Hector withdrawing, they leapt still more eagerly on the Trojans, and took thought of battle). With Dionysus withdrawn, the battle swings again in favour of the Indians [32.151–2]: Δηριάδης δ' ὑπέροπλον ἔχων θράσος ἔχραε Βάκχαις, / νεύμασιν Ἡραίοισι τινασσομένου Διονύσου (Now Deriades with exceeding great boldness attacked the Bacchant women, while Dionysus was being shaken at the command of Hera). The Indians led by Deriades now take the part of the Greeks led by Poseidon.[154]

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[153] So Dionysus, the god who produces madness in others, is himself driven mad. We observe his madness through the eyes of Artemis, who wishes to help Dionysus but is too frightened of Hera [32.110–12]: τὸν μὲν ἀμερσινόοιο κατάσχετον ἅλματι λύσσης / Ἄρτεμις ἐσκοπίαζε, καὶ ἤθελε λύσσαν ἐλάσσαι, / ἀλλά μιν ἐπτοίησε βαρύκτυπος ὑψόθεν Ἥρη (Then Artemis saw Bacchus caught in a fit of mind-marauding madness, and would have driven the madness away, but Hera with heavy noise aloft scared her off). Note the fine Nonnian *jeu de mots.*

[154] Further parallels can be discerned: the extended nautical simile which compares the confusion of the Dionysiac army to sailors on a stormy sea [32.153–61] refers back to *Iliad* 14, where the sea-god Poseidon leads the Greek troops back on to the field; see the comparison between the crash of the sea and the clash of the opposing troops at *Il.* 14.394–5: οὔτε θαλάσσης κῦμα τόσον βοάᾳ ποτὶ χέρσον, / ποντόθεν ὀρνύμενον πνοιῇ Βορέω ἀλεγεινῇ (Not so loudly roars the wave of the sea on the shore, driven up from the deep by the dread blast of the North Wind).

At 35.262ff. Zeus finally wakes up from his deceiving sleep:

> ἔγρετο δὲ Ζεὺς
> Καυκάσου ἐν κορυφῇσιν ἀπορρίψας πτερὸν Ὕπνου·
> καὶ δόλον ἠπεροπῆα μαθὼν κακοεργέος Ἥρης
> Σειληνοὺς ἐδόκευε πεφυζότας, ἔδρακε Βάκχας
> σπερχομένας ἀγεληδὸν ἀπὸ τριόδων, ἀπὸ πύργων,
> καὶ Σατύρους κείροντα καὶ ἀμώοντα γυναῖκας
> Δηριάδην ἐνόησεν ὀπίστερον, ὄρχαμον Ἰνδῶν,
> υἱέα δ' ἐν δαπέδῳ κατακείμενον· ἀμφὶ δὲ νύμφαι
> ἐγγὺς ἔσαν στεφανηδόν· ὁ δ' ἐν στροφάλιγγι κονίης
> κεῖτο καρηβαρέων, ὀλιγοδρανὲς ἄσθμα τιταίνων,
> ἀφρὸν ἀκοντίζων χιονώδεα, μάρτυρα λύσσης.

(Zeus awoke on the peaks of Caucasus and threw off the wing of sleep. He understood the beguiling trick of Hera the mischiefmaker when he saw the Silenoi in flight, when he saw the Bacchant women hurrying in herds from the threeways and the walls, and behind them the Indian chieftain Deriades, cutting down Satyrs and mowing down women; he saw his own son lying on the ground, and the nymphs all round him in a ring, but he lay in the whirling dust heavy-headed, half-fainting, breathing hard, sputtering white foam to witness his frenzy.)
[35.262–72]

This scene is a closely adapted from the 'awakening of Zeus' at the start of *Iliad* 15. The length and detail of the allusion leaves us in no doubt that we have reached a parallel stage in Nonnus' *Indiad* narrative.[155]

The Indians now raise a war-cry [32.175–6]: . . . Βάκχου μὴ παρεόντος ἀταρβέες ἔδραμον Ἰνδοί, / καὶ κτύπον ἐννεάχιλον ἐπέκτυπε λοίγιος Ἄρης. . . . (The Indians ran forwards fearlessly, now Bacchus was not there, and deathly Ares shouted as loud as nine thousand . . .); this is a clear reminiscence of an earlier Homeric shout [*Il.* 14.148–9]: ὅσσον τ' ἐννεάχιλοι ἐπίαχον, ἢ δεκάχιλοι / ἀνέρες ἐν πολέμῳ, ἔριδα ξυνάγοντες Ἄρηος (as loud as nine thousand warriors, or ten thousand, cry in battle when they join the strife of the War god). As Nonnus describes the successes of the Indian warriors, he calls directly on the Muses of Homer [32.184–5]: Ὁμηρίδες, εἴπατε, Μοῦσαι· / τίς θάνε, τίς δούπησεν ὑπ' ἔγχεϊ Δηριαδῆος; (O Muses of Homer! Tell me who dies, who fell to the spear of Deriades); likewise Homer had called upon *his* Muses when detailing the lists of the Greek successes [*Il.* 14.508–10]: ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι, / ὅς τις δὴ πρῶτος βροτόεντ' ἀνδράγρι' Ἀχαιῶν / ἦρατ' . . . (Tell me now, you Muses who have dwellings on Olympus, who was first of the Achaeans to carry away the bloodstained spoils of warriors).

155 *Il.* 15.4–11: ἔγρετο δὲ Ζεὺς / Ἴδης ἐν κορυφῇσι παρὰ χρυσοθρόνου Ἥρης, / στῆ δ' ἄρ' ἀναΐξας, ἴδε δὲ Τρῶας καὶ Ἀχαιούς, / τοὺς μὲν ὀξρινομένους, τοὺς δὲ κλονέοντας ὄπισθεν / Ἀργείους· μετὰ δέ σφι Ποσειδάωνα ἄνακτα. / Ἕκτορα δ' ἐν πεδίῳ ἴδε κείμενον· ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταῖροι / ἥαθ', ὁ δ' ἀργαλέῳ ἔχετ' ἄσθματι κῆρ ἀπινύσσων, / αἷμ' ἐμέων . . . (And Zeus awoke on the peaks of Ida beside Hera of the golden

Having now woken up, Zeus seeks to restore 'order' to the battlefield. He forces Hera to desist from her meddling and sends word to Poseidon to desist from helping the Greeks. Hector recovers from his concussion and is given fresh confidence by Ares. The Trojans, under the command of Hector, will now remain victorious until they have driven the Greeks right back to their ships, which will take the narrative with its various twists and turns up to *Iliad* 18. Zeus restores a similar order to the Dionysiac battlefield. He forces Hera not only to desist from her meddling, but also to cure Dionysus of his madness [35.314–16]: προέηκε παλίγκοτον εὐνέτιν Ἥρην / Βακχείης κακότητος ἀλεξήτειραν ἀνάγκῃ, / ἵλαον εὐάντητον ἀτυζομένῳ Διονύσῳ (He dismissed his resentful consort Hera, to heal the trouble of Bacchus against her will, to be gracious and friendly towards afflicted Dionysus). In contrast to the Homeric account, Nonnus' rejuvenated hero will suffer no further reversal.

3. *Madness of Dionysus*

Nonnus' detailed reworking of the Διὸς ἀπάτη is more than the clever imitation of a single Iliadic scene; it forms part of his bold rescripting of the main elements of the Homeric narrative into his own *Indiad.* A key element (perhaps *the* key element) of the Iliadic narrative which seems to be absent from Nonnus' *Indiad* is the μῆνις of Achilles. One might imagine that Nonnus has deliberately chosen to edit the 'anger' out of his story, to suit the purpose of his own Dionysiac narrative (whatever that might be). In fact, it has not been deleted, but subtly metamorphosed. As Hopkinson notes, 'the μανία of Dionysus and his absence from the battle during Books 32–5 corresponds to the μῆνις and voluntary withdrawal of Achilles'.[156] 'Anger' is no longer the driving force behind Nonnus' Dionysiac narrative; it is refashioned as μανία and contained as a discrete episode within the large-scale recasting of the Διὸς ἀπάτη.[157]

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throne. Then he sprang up and saw Trojans and Achaeans, these in rout, and the Argives behind then driving them on, and among them the lord Poseidon. And Hector he saw lying on the plain, while about him sat his comrades, and he was distressed with painful breathing, distraught in mind and vomiting blood . . .).

[156] Hopkinson (1994b) 37 n. 65. The observation goes back at least as far as Chamberlayne (1916) 46. In the *Posthomerica* Quintus casts Ajax in the image of Achilles. The μανία which overcomes Ajax when he does not win the arms of Achilles also corresponds to the μῆνις of Achilles.

[157] Whereas in the *Iliad* Hera's deception of Zeus occurs as a consequence of

The similarities are clear. As Achilles' anger causes the death of his fellow Greeks, so Dionysus' madness brings destruction on his own troops. Like Achilles, Dionysus withdraws into isolation, away from the society of men [32.125–6]:[158] καὶ μογέων Διόνυσος ἐρημάδος ἔνδοθι λόχμης / δύσβατα φοιτητῆρι διέστιχεν οὔρεα ταρσῷ . . . (Thus tormented in the lonely forest, Dionysus paced the pathless mountains with wandering foot). While Achilles remains withdrawn from battle, other characters must take his place. Patroclus explicitly plays the part of Achilles when he marches out to battle in the hero's armour [*Il.* 16.278–83].[159] In the *Dionysiaca* the withdrawal of Dionysus creates a similar vacuum which demands to be filled. Nonnus' narrative engages with the question of who will fill the gap when 'Achilles' is not there.[160] At the end of Book 32 it is Aiacus, the grandfather of Achilles, who alone stands firm [32.281–3]: καὶ πρόμαχοι τότε πάντες ὑπέκφυγον· ἐν δὲ κυδοιμοῖς / Αἰακὸς αὐτόθι μοῦνος ἐλείπετο, μαρνάμενος δέ / δεύετο μὴ παρεόντος ἀνικήτου Διονύσου (Now the leaders had slunk away, all but Aiacus, who was left there alone in the battle fighting on, though he needed the presence of unconquered Dionysus).[161]

The parallel between the 'anger' of Achilles and the 'madness' of Dionysus can also aid our understanding of the way in which the narrative progresses once Zeus wakes up in Book 35. We have just seen how Dionysus' rejuvenation and successful return to battle owes much to the presentation of Hector in *Iliad* 15. However, if Dionysus' absence from battle parallels Achilles' voluntary withdrawal from the fighting, then perhaps a further parallel can be drawn when Dionysus returns to the field. In *Iliad* 19 Achilles is reconciled with Agamemnon,

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Achilles' μῆνις (for if the hero did not need to be appeased, Zeus would not have favoured the Trojans, and Hera would not have needed to deceive her husband), in the *Dionysiaca* the μανία of Dionysus occurs as a consequence of the deception of Zeus. Nonnus has reversed the poles of Homeric causation: the deception of Zeus no longer functions to serve the theme of 'anger' but is deployed to cause a parallel 'madness' in Dionysus. The result, of course, is the same in both epics: the advancing army suffers a reverse.

[158] *Il.* 1.348–50: αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς / δακρύσας ἑτάρων ἄφαρ ἕζετο νόσφι λιασθείς, / θῖν' ἐφ' ἁλὸς πολιῆς, ὁρόων ἐπ' ἀπείρονα πόντον (But Achilles burst into tears and drew apart from his comrades, and sat down on the shore of the grey sea, looking out across the boundless deep).

[159] In turn, when he has killed Patroclus, Hector puts on the hero's armour [see *Il.* 22.322–3] and enacts, albeit ironically and unsuccessfully, the role of Achilles.

[160] Quintus has already made much of this strategy in his *Posthomerica*, where character after character queues up to take on the role of Achilles, from Ajax through to Neoptolemus.

[161] Nonnus is careful to reveal that Aiacus is reliant on the help of Dionysus.

the 'cause' of his μῆνις: so in Book 35 Dionysus is reconciled with Hera, the cause of his μανία. Nor does the correspondence end there. Achilles' return to battle has been motivated by his grief for the death of Patroclus. It seems to be no coincidence that Dionysus mentions his grief for Opheltes, his own Patroclus, in a speech delivered just before his own return to battle [35.372–5]: ἐν κραδίῃ δέ / ἀμφότερον κοτέω τε καὶ ἄχνυμαι, ὅττι δοκεύω / Δηριάδην ζώοντα καὶ ἀκτερέιστον Ὀφέλτην, / μεμφόμενον μετὰ πότμον ἀεργέα χεῖρα Λυαίου (In my heart is both anger and sorrow, that I see Deriades alive and Opheltes unburied, reproaching after death the idle hand of Lyaius). The promotion of Opheltes to the status of Patroclus comes as something of a surprise. The only earlier mention of this hero was as one name in a long list of Deriades' victims [32.184–7]. Opheltes *qua* Patroclus provides a neat motivation for the return of the hero to the battlefield.

Nonnus has brought together two separate moments of Iliadic narrative. By casting Dionysus in the role of both Hector *and* Achilles, Nonnus allows the hero of the *Indiad* to move out of the Διὸς ἀπάτη and straight into the final climactic stages of the war. This neatly excises a long section of the *Iliad* (in which the Trojans advance towards the Greek ships) without destroying the basic narrative sequence.[162] Nonnus thus continues his advance through the Homeric narrative, and produces his own parallel narrative sequence, adapted and reshaped (owing to both necessity and an ever present desire for variation) but still clearly recognisable as a sustained re-enactment of the original.

4. *Return of Dionysus*

Dionysus' return to the battlefield in Book 36 is accompanied by reentry of the gods into battle against each other [36.3–7]: ἀμφοτέρῃ δὲ φάλαγγι θεοὶ ναετῆρες Ὀλύμπου / κεκριμένοι στέλλοντο κυβερνητῆρες ἐνυοῦς, / οἱ μὲν Δηριαδῆος ἀρηγόνες, οἱ δὲ Λυαίου. / Ζεὺς μὲν ἄναξ μακάρων ὑψίζυγος ὑψόθι Κέρνης / ἄρεος εἶχε τάλαντα παρακλιδόν (The gods who dwell in Olympus ranged themselves into two parties to direct the warfare on both sides, these supporting Deriades, those Lyaius. Zeus Lord of the blessed throned high on Cerne held the tilting balance of war). Nonnus keeps perfectly in step with the Iliadic

[162] The 'cutting' between these scenes is so well executed, the dovetail so perfectly crafted, that modern critics have failed to notice that there is a join at all.

narrative at this point, since Achilles' return to war is also accompanied by the re-entry of gods on to the battlefield—Zeus sits on the top of Olympus and sends the other gods down to fight for their favourites [*Il.* 20.23–5].

At 36.133 Hermes steps forward to put an end to the divine fighting: ἀνέκοψε θεῶν ἔμφυλον ἐνυώ (He put an end to the gods' intestine strife). With these words Nonnus draws a neat line under his imitation of the Homeric 'battle of the gods' and moves on to describe the first confrontation between Deriades and Dionysus. This confrontation imitates the first engagement between Hector and Achilles, which forms the climax to *Iliad* 20.[163] When Deriades spots Dionysus on the battlefield he unleashes a salvo of threats [36.140–60]. He encourages his own troops to 'consume with fire every thyrsus of the enemy '—[36.147]: καὶ πυρὶ δήια θύρσα μαραίνετε—and decapitate the Silenoi and Satyrs 'with threshing steel'—ἀλοιητῆρι σιδήρῳ [36.149]. The imagery employed here appears to allude to the closing lines of Hector's speech to his troops [*Il.* 20.371–2]: τοῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀντίος εἶμι, καὶ εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικεν, / εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικε, μένος δ' αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ (I am going to meet him, though his hands are like fire, yes, though his hands are like fire and his heart like burnished steel). The Iliadic narrative may also have influenced the scene where Dionysus and Deriades join combat. Hector confronts Achilles openly on the battlefield *after* the death of his brother Polydorus [*Il.* 20.421–3]: οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτ' ἔτλη / δηρὸν ἑκὰς στρωφᾶσθ', ἀλλ' ἀντίος ἦλθ' Ἀχιλῆϊ, / οξὺ δόρυ κραδάων, φλογὶ εἴκελος (Nor could he longer endure to range apart, but went to face Achilles, brandishing his sharp spear, like a flame); just so Deriades and Dionysus join combat [36.392–3] *after* the death of Logasides, a favourite of the Indian chief.[164]

Like Achilles, Dionysus is unsuccessful in his attempt to kill his enemy. His failure is, however, caused by different circumstances. In *Iliad* 20 Achilles is frustrated in his designs when Apollo hides Hector in a cloud.[165] In Book 36 Dionysus suffers no similar check. He

[163] Nonnus has thus produced a simplified version of *Iliad* 20, reducing it to its essential components i] battle against the gods (which includes a second section of divine fighting from *Il.* 21.328–513); ii] Hector versus Achilles (omitting the confrontation between Aeneas and Achilles [*Il.* 20.79–352]).

[164] 36.282–4: Λωγασίδην, ὃς μοῦνος, ἐπεὶ σοφὸς ἔσκε μαχητής, / Δηριάδῃ μεμέλητο δοριθρασέων πλέον Ἰνδῶν / καί μιν ἄναξ φιλέοι μετὰ Μορρέα (Logasides, who alone, because he was accomplished in the art of war, was more precious to Deriades than any of the bold Indian spearmen, and the king loved him best after Morrheus).

[165] *Il.* 20.438–44.

defeats Deriades with vine tendrils, but instead of killing him, sets him free [36.382–3]: καὶ σκεδάσας Διόνυσος ἑὴν πολύδεσμον ὀπώρην / γυιοπέδην εὔβοτρυν ἀνέσπασε Δηριαδῆος (Then Dionysus dispersed his entangling fruit, and broke off the fettering grapes from Deriades); once released, Deriades does not repent but returns to his insolent ways [36.389]: ἀλλὰ πάλιν πρόμος ἔσκε θεημάχος (Once more he was the chieftain defying the gods).

In the Homeric version, Achilles continues to attack Hector, even though he is surrounded by a protective covering of mist [*Il.* 20.445–6]: τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς / ἔγχεϊ χαλκείῳ, τρὶς δ' ἠέρα τύψε βαθεῖαν... (Three times then did swift-footed noble Achilles rush at him with his bronze spear, and three times he struck the thick mist...). In the Nonnian version, it is Deriades who takes on the role of Achilles, frustrated in his attempts to kill Dionysus/Hector [36.334–6]: Δηριάδης δ' ὑπέροπλος ἐμάρνατο φάσματι κωφῷ, / ἐλπίδι μαψιδίῃ πεφορημένος· ἤθελε δ' αἰεί / ἀψαύστοις ἀκίχητον ἑλεῖν εἴδωλον ἀγοστοῖς (Proud Deriades went on fighting against these unsubstantial phantoms, driven by vain hopes, ever seeking to grasp the intangible image with hands that could not touch). In place of a cloud of mist, Dionysus is protected by his capacity to change shape.[166] With a final thrust of his spear, an impotent Deriades angrily confronts shape-shifting Dionysus [36.339–40]: τί πτώσσεις, Διόνυσε; τί σοι δόλος ἀντὶ κυδοιμοῦ; / Δηριάδην τρομέων πολυδαίδαλον εἶδος ἀμείβεις; ('Why do you hide yourself, Dionysus? Why tricks instead of battle? Do you fear Deriades that you change into so many strange forms?). The actions of the Indian hero clearly recalls the actions of Achilles who thrusts his spear for a fourth and final time, and rails bitterly against the disguised Hector [*Il.* 20.449–50]: ἐξ αὖ νῦν ἔφυγες θάνατον, κύον. ἦ τέ τοι ἄγχι / ἦλθε κακόν ... ('Now again, you dog, you have escaped from death, though the evil came near you indeed...').

Realizing that he will not kill Hector on this occasion, Achilles changes tack, and turns his attention to more accessible targets [*Il.* 20.455ff.]. Deriades, too, adopts a new strategy—[36.354]: ἔνθα θορὼν ἀκίχητος ἀνέδραμεν ὑψόθι δίφρων (Then he leapt unhindered into his car)—but this is the moment when his Iliadic role-playing comes to an end. The Indian chief is at once defeated by Dionysus [36.355–6]: καὶ θεὸς ἀφραίνοντα θεημάχον ἄνδρα δοκεύων / ἄμπελον ἐβλάστησεν

[166] Nonnus 'transforms' Deriades into Achilles in a scene which itself foregrounds the theme of shape-shifting.

ἀρηγόνα δηιοτῆτος (But the god seeing the impious man still foolish, made a vine grow to help his attack). At the parallel point in the Iliadic narrative, Achilles turns away from Hector to deal a death blow to the warrior Dryops [*Il.* 20.455]: . . . Δρύοπ' οὖτα κατ' αὐχένα μέσσον ἄκοντι (He struck Dryops full on the neck with his spear).[167] Thus Hector and Deriades both live to fight another day. As this section has made clear, the escape of Deriades from the clutches of Dionysus is not simply an attempt to 'pad out' the action of the *Indiad*,[168] but represents a crucial stage in Nonnus' inventive transformation of the Iliadic narrative.

5. *Dionysus at War*

a) *Funeral games*

The funeral games for Opheltes in Book 37 presents a full-scale re-enactment of the funeral games of Patroclus in *Iliad* 23; it is Nonnus' closest and most sustained engagement with any individual Homeric scene.[169] In the *Iliad* Achilles does not stop to bury Patroclus until he has killed Hector; Nonnus, by contrast, places the funeral games of Opheltes *before* the death of Deriades/Hector. This difference is not an unmotivated variation, but appears to have a strategic narrative effect. The death of Deriades will form the climax to the Indian war; Nonnus chooses to end his *Iliad* with the death of Hector, not with the reconciliation between Achilles and Priam. In order to present the death of Deriades as the climactic moment of the Indian War, and so as not to deprive his audience of a show-piece of Homeric imitation, Nonnus has reworked the funeral games and placed them into an earlier, less emphatic position. They are followed by the 'epyllion' of Phaethon, whose dramatic importance will be discussed elsewhere.[170]

b) *Battle of the ships*

After Nonnus' closest engagement with Homer in Book 37 comes his most oblique in Book 39.[171] On the face of it, there is no clear

[167] Ironically, Dionysus overwhelms Deriades with vine tendrils at the point where Achilles slays a warrior called Oak-tree.

[168] *Contra* Keydell (1927) 424–6.

[169] See Frangoulis (1995); (1999).

[170] See pp. 185–9. The juxtaposition of funeral games and story-telling recalls the games for Staphylus in Book 19. See pp. 156–8.

[171] On the incomplete state of this book see Keydell (1936) 910.60–911.30.

parallel in Homer's Trojan narrative for the naval battle which is described in Book 39. Homeric heroes fight beside their ships, but never *on* them. Context is important here for establishing the faint yet unmistakeable resonance of Homeric allusion. In the book which follows the naval battle, the death of Deriades is described (a scene which clearly recalls the death of Hector in *Iliad* 22). In the *Iliad* the death of Hector is preceded by a book which describes Achilles' own aquatic battle, the μάχη παραποτάμιος of *Iliad* 21. This is the second time that Nonnus has utilized this Homeric scene; it was employed earlier, and more directly, in Book 22, at the point where Dionysus and his troops cross the river Hydaspes.[172] In Book 39 the allusion is much fainter, but the juxtaposition of a scene of watery slaughter with the death of the chief enemy warrior, makes the resonance hard to deny.

In the heavy fighting beside the Scamander, 'the water runs red with blood'—[*Il.* 21.21]:[173] ἐρυθαίνετο δ' αἵματι ὕδωρ—the river is clogged with armour and corpses—[*Il.* 21.301–2]: πολλὰ δὲ τεύχεα καλὰ δαϊκταμένων αἰζηῶν / πλῶον καὶ νέκυες (many fair weapons of young men were floating there, along with their corpses) and fish pick at the remains of the dead [*Il.* 21.203–4]: τὸν μὲν ἄρ' ἐγχέλυές τε καὶ ἰχθύες ἀμφεπένοντο, / δημὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι ἐπινεφρίδιον κείροντες (With him then the eels and fishes were busy, nibbling and tearing the fat about his kidneys). Nonnus elaborates this scene of watery carnage with gory relish [39.240–3]: . . . ἐν ἰχθυόεντι δὲ λαιμῷ / ἄπνοον αἰθύσσουσα νέκυν τυμβεύσατο φώκη, / ξανθὸν ἐρευγομένη κόρον αἵματος. ὀλλυμένων δέ / τεύχεα πόντος ἔδεκτο . . . (Many again had sepulture in the maw of seamonsters, or the darting seal entombed the inanimate corpse in her fishy throat and belched out a stream of brownish blood. The sea took the armour of the dead . . .).

When Achilles is on the point of being overwhelmed by Xanthus, Hera sends her son Hephaestus to fight against the river with his fire [*Il.* 21.337–8]: σὺ δὲ Ξάνθοιο παρ' ὄχθας / δένδρεα καῖ', ἐν δ' αὐτὸν ἵει πυρί (And you along the banks of Xanthus burn up his trees, and set him about with fire). Fire also features as a prominent weapon in Book 39—thus Deriades threatens to attack Dionysus [39.39]: εἰ θεὸς ἔπλετο Βάκχος, ἐμῷ/ <u>πυρὶ</u> Βάκχον ὀλέσσω (If Bacchus is a god, I will destroy Bacchus with my fire). Furthermore, at the climax of

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[172] See p. 65; 164–6.

[173] Cf. 39.226–7: ἀρτιχύτῳ δέ / <u>αἵματι</u> κυανέης <u>ἐρυθαίνετο</u> <u>νῶτα θαλάσσης</u> (The back of the blue sea grew red with newly-shed blood).

the naval battle, Eurymedon 'invents' the fire-ship, which destroys many of the enemy ships and sends the sea-nymphs diving for cover [39.391–401].[174] At this point it is revealed that Ares has run away from the fire of Hephaestus [39.403–4]; and the battle is now brought to a speedy conclusion. Like Ares, Xanthus is himself defeated by the fire of Hephaestus; and it is his capitulation that brings the μάχη παραποτάμιος to its conclusion [*Il.* 21.369ff.].

6. *Death of Deriades*

At the end of Book 39 Deriades runs away, enacting the role of the fleeing Trojans at the end of *Iliad* 21.[175] He is still in flight at the beginning of Book 40, when Athena spots him from her high vantage point [40.3ff.].[176] Athena, having first transformed herself into the image of Morrheus, now stops Deriades in his tracks and encourages him to stay and fight [40.7–9]: κλεψινόοις δ' ὀάροισι παρήπαφεν ὄρχαμον Ἰνδῶν, / Μορρέος εἶδος ἔχουσα, χαριζομένη δὲ Λυαίῳ / Δηριάδην ἀνέκοψε . . . (All to please Dionysus, she checked Deriades, cajoling the Indian chieftain with mindstealing whispers). In a neat moment of allusive 'double-vision', Deriades is suddenly transformed into the figure of Hector, running for his life around the walls of Troy. Athena's deceptive intervention is in fact clearly modelled on the scene in *Iliad* 22, when this same goddess, in the guise of Hector's brother Deiphobus, arrests the Trojan's flight, and persuades him to stand his ground against Achilles [*Il.* 22.229–31]: ἠθεῖ', ἦ μάλα δή σε βιάζεται ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς, / ἄστυ πέρι Πριάμοιο ποσὶν ταχέεσσι δίωκων· / ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ στέωμεν, καὶ ἀλεξώμεσθα μένοντες ('My dear brother, hard

[174] The image of burning ships may remind us of the general threat presented to the Greek ships, and the firing of the ship in *Iliad* 16.

[175] 39.405–7; cf. *Il.* 21.610–11. The characterization of Deriades may owe something also to the Trojan Agenor, chased by Achilles at the end of *Iliad* 21.

[176] 40.3–5: ἀλλά μιν ἀθρήσασα <u>πεφυζότα</u> Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη—/ ἕζετο γὰρ κατὰ πόντον ἐπὶ προβλῆτος ἐρίπνης / ναύμαχον εἰσορόωσα κορυσσομένων μόθον Ἰνῶν . . . (But Pallas Athena beheld him in flight, for she sat on a headland high over the sea, and watched the Indians contending in their battle high over the sea). Compare the description of Xerxes watching the battle of Salamis at Hdt. 8.93. A closer parallel may be found at the end of *Iliad* 21, where Priam looks down from the battlements of Troy and spies Achilles routing the Trojan forces [*Il.* 21.526–8]: ἑστήκει δ' ὁ γέρων Πρίαμος θείου ἐπὶ πύργου, / ἐς δ' ἐνόησ' Ἀχιλῆα πελώριον· αὐτὰρ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ / Τρῶες ἄφαρ κλονέοντο <u>πεφυζότες</u>, οὐδέ τις ἀλκὴ / γίγνεθ' . . . (And the old man Priam stood on the god-built wall, and noticed huge Achilles, and how before him the Trojans were being driven in headlong rout; and help there was none . . .).

indeed is fleet Achilles pressing on you, chasing you with swift feet around the city of Priam. But come, let us make a stand and defend ourselves staying here').

Like Hector, Deriades is persuaded to make a stand against the enemy hero. As he casts his spear for the fourth time he calls upon Morrheus for assistance [40.70ff.]. But with Morrheus nowhere to be seen, Deriades realizes that he has been deceived by Athena [40.79]: καὶ δόλον ἠπεροπῆα σοφῆς ἐνόησεν Ἀθήνης (He recognized the deluding trick of wise Athena). Similarly, when his brother Deiphobus disappears, Hector exclaims [*Il.* 22.299]: ἐμὲ δ' ἐξαπάτησεν Ἀθήνη (Athena has deceived me). At this point in the Iliadic narrative the two heroes close with each other for their final confrontation [*Il.* 22.306ff.]. Nonnus varies his narration, and Deriades makes a final attempt to run away [40.84–5]: Δηριάδην δ' ἐδίωκε ταχύδρομον· αὐτὰρ ὁ φεύγων / κοῦφος ἐπειγομέναις ἐτιταίνετο σύνδρομος αὔραις (He pursued swiftrunning Deriades; he raced off light and quick as the hurrying winds). This variation is itself a clear reworking of the final pursuit of Hector.[177] Achilles and Hector run past the washing places at the source of the Scamander [*Il.* 22.147–8]; Dionysus and Deriades find themselves close to the river Hydaspes [40.86–7]. On the bank of the river Dionysus cuts Deriades down with his thyrsus [40.91–2]. In contrast to the Homeric scene, the dying hero is granted no 'last words'.[178]

7. *Fall of the city*

The death of Deriades equates directly with the end of the Indian War [40.96–7]: χρονίην δὲ θεοὶ μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν / σὺν Διὶ παμμεδέοντι πάλιν νόστησαν Ὀλύμπῳ (Now the long Indian war was ended, the gods returned again to Olympus with Zeus the Lord of all). In the scenes which follow, the narrative of *Iliad* 22–4 is reworked to fit into this wider pattern. Nonnus transforms the end of the *Iliad*, which is properly the resolution of Achilles' anger, into a suitable ending for the entire Indian war.[179]

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[177] Hopkinson (1994b) 26–7 observes that the deception 'is placed before rather than after the final pursuit'. In fact, as we have seen, Deriades re-enacts the 'final pursuit' both before *and* after the deception scene.

[178] Cf. Hector's last words at *Il.* 22.358–60.

[179] Nonnus follows the lead of Quintus Smyrnaeus who adapted Iliadic material in his narrative of the fall of Troy. After the death of Hector Achilles calls out

When the Bacchants celebrate the triumph of Dionysus and attack the body of Deriades with their spears, they re-enact the response of the Greek troops after the death of Hector [40.98–100]:[180] Βάκχοι δ' ἀμφαλάλαζον ἀδηρίτου Διονύσου / δῆριν ἀνευάζοντες, ἀολλίζοντο δὲ πολλοί / ἔγχεσιν οὐτάζοντες ὅλον χρόα Δηριαδῆος (The Bacchants cheered in triumph around Dionysus the invincible, crying evoi for the conflict, and many flocked around Deriades piercing him everywhere with their spears).[181] After this scene comes the triple lamentation of Protonoe, Cheirobie and Orsiboe, which is based on the laments for the dead Hector in *Iliad* 22, but also borrowing much from the three laments in *Iliad* 24.[182] These dirges lament not only the death of Deriades, but also the end of the entire Indian City.[183] Orsiboe's speech leaves us in no doubt [40.197–200]: πατρίδος ἡμετέρης πέσον ἐλπίδες· οὐκέτι λεύσσω / ἀνέρα Δηριαδῆα καὶ οὐκέτι γαμβρὸν Ὀρόντην. / Δηριάδης τέθνηκεν· ἐσυλήθη πόλις Ἰνδῶν, / ἀρραγὲς ἤριπε τεῖχος ἐμῆς χθονός (The hopes of our country have perished! No longer I see Deriades my husband, no longer Orontes my son. Deriades is dead; the city of the Indians is plundered). The fall of the city is not a future fear, as it remains for the mourners of the *Iliad*, but a present reality.

exultantly to his comrades [*Il.* 22.393]: ἠράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν Ἕκτορα δῖον.... (We have won great glory. We have killed the noble Hector). Quintus recasts this boast, placing it in the mouths of the Greek army at the very end of the Trojan War [Quint. Smyrn. 14.117–18]: ἠνύσαμεν πολέμοιο μακροῦ τέλος· ἠράμεθ' εὐρὺ / κῦδος ὁμῶς δηίοισι μέγα πτολίεθρον ἑλόντες (We have touched the goal of this long war, have won glory, have smitten our foes and their great town). Nonnus replays this same Homeric allusion at the end of the Indian War, placing it in the mouths of the victorious Bacchants [40.217]: ἠράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν ὄρχαμον Ἰνδῶν (We have won great glory. We have killed the Indian chief). Both Quintus and Nonnus attribute the vaunt not to a substitute Achilles, but to the army in general. The reason for their attribution may lie in their awareness of a long-standing Homeric problem, first mentioned in the A Scholia, namely that the boast is not appropriate for Achilles: ἀθετοῦνται στίχοι δύο, ὅτι παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν Ἀχιλλέως οἱ λόγοι (These two lines are athetized, because their sense goes against the glory of Achilles). Alternatively, they may have understood the boast as it was understood in the Vr. A manuscript—not as spoken by Achilles, but as the paean delivered by all the Greeks: οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ παιάν (This is the paean); see Leaf (1960) *ad loc.*

180 Note here the word play on δῆρις and Δηριάδης, where the end of the Indian leader marks the end of strife in a quite literal sense.

181 The difference for the Greek soldiers is that the end of their war still lies at some uncertain point in the future.

182 Cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 27: 'in structure and at times in sentiment these lamentations resemble those of Andromache, Helen, and Hecuba at the close of the *Iliad* (24.718–75)'.

183 The Homeric laments themselves similarly anticipate the fall of Troy.

According to the sequence of the Iliadic narrative, the lamentation for the death of Hector is followed by the burial and funeral games of Patroclus [*Iliad* 23]. This scene has already been imitated at length in Book 37; but, as if in response to the expectation of ongoing engagement with the narrative of the *Iliad*, Nonnus includes a second burial in his account. After the lamentation for Deriades, Dionysus thus builds a vast tomb for the unburied dead [40.220–2]:[184] πρῶτα μὲν ἐκτερέιξεν ἀτυμβεύτων στίχα νεκρῶν, / δωμήσας ἕνα τύμβον ἀπείριτον εὐρέι κόλπῳ / ἄκριτον ἀμφὶ πυρὴν ἑκατόμπεδον (He first gave their due to the crowd of unburied dead. He built round the pyre one vast tomb for all alike with a wide bosom, a hundred feet long). In place of games, music is played in honour of the dead [40.222ff.]. When the funeral is over, Dionysus washes himself with water [40.234]: ὕδατι γυῖα καθήρας. This action of cleansing refers back to the early stages of *Iliad* 23, when Achilles refuses to wash until after the burial of Patroclus [*Il.* 23.44–5]: οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρήατος ἆσσον ἱκέσθαι, / πρίν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦαι . . . (It cannot be that water should come near my head until I have laid Patroclus on the fire and have heaped him a mound . . .). Rose's condemnation of this Nonnian scene as 'a particularly bad imitation of Homer' highlights a general critical failure to grasp the allusive sophistication of Nonnus' narrative.[185]

In the Iliadic narrative, once the funeral games for Patroclus are over, Priam sets out into the Greek camp to supplicate Achilles for the body of Hector. Nonnus presents his own Dionysiac version of this scene at 40.234–50. Intertextuality is signposted with the opening words of the section: παυσάμενος δὲ πόνοιο [40.234] ~ *Iliad* 24.1: λῦτο δ' ἀγών.[186] The crucial moment of reconciliation between Priam and Achilles is marked by a meal, which signifies reintegration into the norms and conventions of society. Once he has handed over the body of Hector to Priam, Achilles suggests that they should eat, reminding the Trojan king that even Niobe ate in her misfortune [*Il.* 24.601–3]: νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα δόρπου. / καὶ γάρ τ' ἠΰκομος Νιόβη

[184] Opheltes is also furnished with a πυρὴν ἑκατόμπεδον [37.44]—a direct quotation from *Il.* 23.164.

[185] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 3.170–1.

[186] Cf. 40.219: ἀμπνεύσας δὲ πόνοιο καὶ αἱματόεντος ἀγῶνος (Now resting from his labours and the bloody contest). Nonnus pointedly reworks a tag that he has already used in its original Homeric form on five previous occasions: 3.1; 5.49; 11.1; 20.1; 38.1.

ἐμνήσατο σίτου, / τῇ περ δώδεκα παῖδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὄλοντο (But for now let us take thought of a meal. For even the fair-haired Niobe took thought of food, though twelve children perished in her halls). The Dionysiac version of this same scene places emphasis (not surprisingly) on drinking rather than eating [40.236–8]:[187] ἐπὶ ξυνῷ δὲ κυπέλλῳ / Βάκχοις δαινυμένοισι μιῆς ἥψαντο τραπέζης / ξανθὸν ὕδωρ πίνοντες ἀπ' οἰνοπόρου ποταμοῖο (Now pacified they touched one table with banqueting Bacchoi over a shared bowl, and drank the yellow water from the winebreeding river).

By equating the death of Deriades with the end of the Indian War, and so transforming the end of the Iliadic narrative into the end-point for the entire war, the Dionysiac narrative manages to avoid lengthy engagement with the stories of the Posthomeric tradition.[188] No further troops arrive to help the beleaguered 'Trojans', no arrow takes away the life of 'Achilles', the Indian city is not razed to the ground, and there are no parallel scenes of carnage and conflagration. The lack of Posthomeric allusion from Nonnus' cycle highlights the fact that Dionysus is a benign victor, who operates under a different ethical code.[189] Dionysus does not destroy his enemies, he seeks to pacify them; he does not raze the city to the ground but leaves the fabric and social structure largely intact, assigns to the city a pious governor, and holds a reconciliatory feast for both sides [40.235–6].[190]

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[187] In the Homeric passage, by contrast, drink is referred to only in passing [*Il.* 24.628]: αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἕντο . . . (But when they had put from them their desire for food and drink . . .).

[188] See Davies (1989) 53–79; *EGF* pp. 45–66. The *Aethiopis* follows on so closely from the *Iliad* that, according to the Scholia on *Il.* 24.804, some read ὣς οἵ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἕκτορος. ἦλθε δ' Ἀμαζών / Ἄρηος θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο (In this way they held funeral for Hector. And now there came an Amazon, the daughter of Ares, the mighty murderer); Compare the way Quintus Smyrnaeus follows closely on the heels of Homer [Quint. Smyrn. 1.1–2]: εὖθ' ὑπὸ Πηλείωνι δάμη θεοείκελος Ἕκτωρ / καί ἑ πυρὴ κατέδαψε καὶ ὀστέα γαῖα κεκεύθει (When godlike Hector was slain by Achilles and the pyre had eaten him up and his bones lay in the ground).

[189] Although we have witnessed a peaceful end to the Indian war, where both sides sit down together to feast in reconciliation, the description of the divided spoils reveals a more violent undercurrent [40.269–71]: πολλὴ δ' ἐκ θαλάμοιο σὺν ἀρτιγάμῳ παρακοίτῃ / ληιδίη πλοκάμων μελανόχροος εἵλκετο νύμφη, / δέσμιον αὐχένα δοῦλον ὑποζεύξασα λεπάδνῳ (Many a blackskin bride was dragged out of her chamber by the hair, her neck bound fast under the yoke of slavery).

[190] It might be suggested that, in rendering the later story of Troy as an epic footnote Nonnus is passing comment on the poets of the Posthomeric tradition. The *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnaeus is not a simple retelling of what happens after

8. *No second Troy?*

The only Posthomeric material which appears to have kept its place is that which concerns the division of the spoils. For when, after the victory feast, Dionysus turns his attentions to the journey home, he sets about the dividing the booty [40.251–2; 55]: ἀλλ' ὅτε λυσιπόνοιο παρήλυθε κῶμος ἑορτῆς, / νίκης ληίδα πᾶσαν ἑλὼν μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν / . . . / . . . / καὶ δηίων ὅλον ὄλβον ἐληίζοντο μαχηταί . . . (But when the revels of the carefree feast were over, and Dionysus had gathered all the spoil after his Indian War . . . The whole wealth of the enemy was given to the army as their plunder). As we learn from Proclus and Apollodorus, one of the last things the Greeks did before they sailed away was to divide the spoils.[191] However, this does not mark the true extent of Nonnus' engagement with Posthomeric material. Although it has remained unnoticed, Nonnus has ironically restaged both the 'Wooden Horse' and the 'sack of Troy' at an earlier point in his narrative.[192]

a) *Wooden Horse*

The Indian ambush at the beginning of Book 22 bears more than a passing resemblance to that epic ambush *par excellence*, the Wooden Horse.[193] The λόχος . . . Ἀθήνης described by Triphiodorus (to take a source closest to Nonnus in time) is deftly reworked into a λόχος

Homer. It relies heavily upon the frame of the *Iliad.* No sooner has the 'real' Achilles been killed than a whole line of surrogate Achilleses queue up to take his place, from Ajax onwards. Nonnus' silence may perhaps remind us that there is no 'real' Posthomeric narrative, since it derives so extensively from the Homeric narrative.

[191] See Proclus, *Iliupersidos enarratio* 31–2 (*EGF* p. 62): Νεοπτόλεμος Ἀνδρομάχην γέρας λαμβάνει. καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ λάφυρα διανέμονται (Neoptolemus takes Andromache as a prize, and the remaining booty is divided up); Apollod. *Epit.* 5.23: κτείναντες δὲ τοὺς Τρῶας τὴν πόλιν ἐνέπρησαν καὶ τὰ λάφυρα ἐμερίσαντο (Having slain the Trojans they set fire to the city and divided the spoil among them).

[192] In Book 34, when the Bacchant Chalcomede is described as a new Amazon—[34.158]: παρθένος ἱμερόεσσα νέη κλυτότοξος Ἀμαζών (the lovely young girl, a new bow-famed Amazon)—we naturally recall the Amazon Penthesilea, who arrived at Troy after the death of Hector; cf. Proclus, *Aethiopidos enarratio* (*EGF* p. 47). In the following book, when an Indian spearman is inflamed with love for a dying Bacchant, his predicament is explicitly likened to that of Achilles with Penthesilea [35.27–9]: καί νύ κε νεκρὸν ἔχων πόθον ἄπνοον, ὥς περ Ἀχιλλεύς, / ἄλλην Πενθεσίλειαν ὑπὲρ δαπέδοιο δοκεύων / ψυχρὰ κονιομένης προσπτύξατο χείλεα νύμφης . . . (Then he would have felt desire for a lifeless corpse, as Achilles did—seeing a new Penthesilea on the ground, he would have kissed the cold lips of the girl).

[193] Readers may be inclined to feel that they have themselves been 'ambushed' by Nonnus' Wooden Horse allusion.

Ἰνδῶν.[194] Where the Greek troops hide 'inside a carved horse'—[*Od.* 4.272] ἵππῳ ἔνι ξεστῷ—the Indians hide 'a belly of wood' [21.338]:[195] ἐνὶ δρυόεντι . . . κόλπῳ. As the horse is hollow inside—[*Od.* 4.277; 8.515] κοῖλον λόχον—so the wood encloses a hollow cavern [21.328]: καὶ κοῖλον ἔην σπέος. From the cover of the wood an Indian spies on the Dionysiac troops [22.55–7]: καί τις ἐσαθρήσας ἑτερότροπα θαύματα Βάκχου, / ὄμμα βαλὼν πυκινοῖο δι' ἀκροτάτοιο κορύμβου, / φύλλα περιστείλας, θηήτορα κύκλον ὀπωπῆς (One there was watching the strange miracles of Bacchus, as he peered out through the top of a thick cluster. He made a round spyhole through the leaves). An analogous role is enacted by Odysseus, who sits in the head of the horse as a look-out [Triph. 202–3]: αὐτὸς δ' ἐν κεφαλῇ σκοπὸς ἕζετο· τὼ δέ οἱ ἄμφω / ὀφθαλμὼ ποθέοντες ἐλάνθανον ἐκτὸς ἐόντας (He sat himself in the head as scout; and both his yearning eyes escaped the notice of those without).

When the scout reports what he has seen to the rest of the troop, the Indians take fright and even contemplate surrendering themselves to Dionysus [22.68–9]: ἔτρεμε δ' Ἰνδὸς ὅμιλος, ἀφειδήσας δὲ κυδοιμοῦ / χάλκεα ταρβαλέων ἀπεσείσατο τεύχεα χειρῶν (The Indian host trembled, and thinking no more of combat, threw the bronze weapons from frightened hands); but Hera restrains them from so doing.[196] In a similar way perhaps, the Greeks come close to abandoning their ambush when they hear Helen's deceptive voice outside the Horse. As Menelaus says about himself and Diomedes [*Od.* 4.282–3]: νῶϊ μὲν ἀμφοτέρω μενεήναμεν ὁρμηθέντε / ἢ ἐξελθέμεναι ἢ ἔνδοθεν αἶψ' ὑπακοῦσαι (We two were eager to rise up and come out, or else to answer at once from inside); but they are restrained by Odysseus [*Od.* 4.384].

In the accounts of the sack of Troy, the Greeks leap down from the Wooden Horse during the night while the Trojans are sleeping off the effects of their evening celebrations. Triphiodorus sets the scene as follows [Triph. 498–501]: οἱ δὲ χοροῖο / παυσάμενοι καμάτῳ

[194] 22.109: καλυπτομένων λόχον ἀνδρῶν (a secret ambuscade of men); Triph. 2: λόχον . . . Ἀθήνης (ambush . . . of Athena).

[195] Since the Indian War antedates the Trojan War, it is appropriate for the Indians to utilize a less complicated stratagem in their ambush.

[196] Compare the deceptive Hera—[22.75]: καὶ ἤπαφεν ὄρχαμον Ἰνδῶν (She deceived the Indian leader)—with the deceptive Helen [Triph. 487]: καί νύ κεν ἄλλον ἔθελγε γυνὴ δολόμητις Ἀχαιῶν (And now would the crafty woman have beguiled another of the Achaeans).

ἀδδηκότες ἤριπον ὕπνῳ. / καὶ δή που φόρμιγξ ἀνεπαύσατο, κεῖτο δὲ κάμνων / αὐλὸς ἐπὶ κρητῆρι (They ceased from the dance, filled with weariness, and fell on sleep. The lyre rested, the weary flute lay beside the mixing-bowl). In the Nonnian replay, the Indians plan to attack when the Bacchic forces are similarly off guard—whilst they are eating [22.82–3]: καί νύ κεν ἀφράστοιο διαθρῴσκοντες[197] ἐναύλου / δαινυμέναις στρατιῇσιν ἐπέχραον αἴθοπες Ἰνδοί (And now the swarthy Indians would have leapt from their hidden ambush and attacked the army of Bacchus at their meal). However, their plan is forestalled by the treasonable defection of an Indian nymph, from whom Dionysus learns about the ambush. The vine god is thus able to make suitable precautions to prevent his force being taken by surprise, and the soldiers eat with their spears on the table [22.125–6]. As a further precaution Dionysus takes the unprecedented step of placing his soldiers on an alcohol ban [22.127–30]: καὶ ταχινὸν μετὰ δόρπον ἐπέρρεον ἀσπιδιῶται / γείτονος ἐκ ποταμοῖο πιεῖν ἐπιδόρπιον ὕδωρ, / νεύμασι θεσπεσίοισι περισσονόου Διονύσου, / μὴ στρατὸν εὐνήσειε μέθη καὶ κῶμα καὶ ὄρφνη (After a hasty meal they hurried under shields to the river near by, to drink water after food, by divine command of prudent Dionysus). Drunkenness, drowsiness and darkness are all ingredients exploited by the Greek ambush;[198] by forbidding wine, Dionysus makes sure that his troops do not suffer the same fate as the Trojans.

Through their sobriety, and with the assistance of Zeus's thunder [22.133–5], the Bacchic troops keep awake, and thus frustrate the Indian plans to launch an effective night-attack. At break of day the Indians renew their attack [22.136–9]. It is at this point that the troops of Dionysus make a tactical retreat to lure the enemy out into the open [22.142–5]: καὶ στρατιαὶ πινυτοῖο δολόφρονι νεύματι Βάκχου / ψευδαλέον φόβον εἶχον ἀταρβέες· ἐκ δὲ κυδοιμοῦ / αὐτόματοι χάζοντο θελήμονες, εἰσόκεν[199] Ἰνδοί / ἐς πεδίον προχέοντο λελοιπότες ἔνδια λόχμης (The army of Bacchus, by the astute orders of their skilful leader, feigned flight though unafraid, and retreated from the battlefield of their own will, until the Indians had left their hiding

[197] Triph. 540: θρῴσκον ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι (They leapt upon the Trojans).

[198] For μέθη καὶ κῶμα see Triph. 498ff. (quoted in the main text); for ὄρφνη see Triph. 503: ἡσυχίη δὲ πόλιν κατεβόσκετο, νυκτὸς ἑταίρη (Peace, the companion of night, browsed about the city).

[199] Cf. Triph. 142–3: πλώετε πασσυδίῃ ψευδώνυμον οἴκαδε νόστον / εἰσόκεν . . . (Sail all together on your pretended homeward way).

place and poured all over the plain). The 'false flight' can be seen as a final flourish in Nonnus' playful rewriting of the episode of the Wooden Horse. Whilst a select band of soldiers waited in the belly of the Horse, the rest of the army (Sinon excepted) sailed off in 'feigned retreat' [Triph. 142]: ψευδώνυμον . . . νόστον. At dawn the Trojans hear rumours of the Greek retreat—[Triph. 237]: φόβον—and pour out on to the plain [Triph. 239]: ἐς πεδίον προχέοντο. Nonnus' 'false retreat' thus restores the troops of Dionysus to the successful position of the Greeks, whilst turning the Indians back into defeated Trojans.

b) *Sack of Troy*

Even though the Indian War ends peacefully, the poet nevertheless finds a way to include a more traditional version of the sack of Troy within the bounds of his epic. By the beginning of Book 35, a mass of Bacchant women have been driven into the Indian city.[200] It is at this point that Nonnus begins to enact an extraordinary, inverted replay of the sack of Troy. Once trapped inside the city, the Dionysiac troops assume the role of Trojans, under attack from besieging Greeks [35.6–10]: ὣς αἱ μὲν κλονέοντο κατὰ πτόλιν ἔνδοθι πύργων / ἔγχεϊ Δηριάδαο· πολυγλώσσῳ δὲ κυδοιμῷ / ἀμφοτέρων κτύπος ἦεν· ἐρευθιόωντι δὲ λύθρῳ / ἄστεος εὐλάιγγες ἐφοινίχθησαν ἀγυιαί / κτεινομένων καναχηδὸν ἐν ἄστεϊ θηλυτεράων (In this manner the women within the walls were harried by the spears of Deriades; and there was a din from both sides of many tongues. The paved streets of the city were empurpled by the red gore, as the women were slain therein amid great tumult). The poet now adds to his description the further dimension of a τειχοσκοπία [35.11–13]: ἀκλινέες δὲ γέροντες ἀερσιλόφων ἐπὶ πύργων / φύλοπιν ἐσκοπίαζον· ὑπὲρ τεγέων δὲ καὶ αὐταί / θυρσοφόρον στίχα πᾶσαν ἐθηήσαντο γυναῖκες (The old men were seated unmoving upon the high precipitous walls, watching the fray; the women also on the rooftops gazed at the whole thyrsus-bearing throng). This is a Homeric τειχοσκοπία with a difference. Instead of

[200] The round-up is begun by Morrheus [34.162ff.], and continued by Deriades [34.343–7]: Βασσαρίδων δὲ φάλαγγα πρὸ ἄστεος ἄορι τύπτων / Δηριάδης ἐδίωκεν, ἕως σχεδὸν ἤλασε πύργων, / οἰγομένου στίχα πᾶσαν ἔσω πυλεῶνος ἐέργων / τείχεος ὑψιλόφοιο· διωκόμεναι δὲ σιδήρῳ / ἄστεος ἐντὸς ἵκανον ἀποσπάδες ἠθάδος ὕλης (But Deriades pursued the band of Bassarids in front of the city, striking with his sword, until he had driven them up to the walls, and the whole company was penned within the open gateway of the lofty fortress).

looking out of the city to the fighting on the plains of Troy, the old men and young girls have inverted their gaze, and turned inwards to watch the battle which rages within their walls. The gaze of the spectators arrests our own gaze as readers and cues our recognition of this inverted literary scene.

Unlike the inhabitants of Troy, the Bacchant women manage to escape to safety. Hermes, in the guise of Dionysus, descends from Olympus and leads the women out of the city. In order to avoid detection, Hermes sends the Indian guards to sleep [35.234–6]: καὶ φυλάκων στοιχηδὸν ἀκοιμήτοισιν ὀπωπαῖς / νήδυμον ὕπνον ἔχευεν ἐῇ πανθελγέι ῥάβδῳ / φώριος Ἑρμείας, πρόμος ἔννυχος (Then furtive Hermeias, the warrior by night, with his all-charming rod shed refreshing sleep on the unresting eyes of the guards in order); he then opens the gates [35.240–1]: χειρὶ δὲ θεσπεσίῃ βριαρὴν κληῖδα πυλάων / ἠλιβάτων ὤϊξε (With his divine hand he opened the forbidding locks of the precipitous gates). This is a curious reverse enactment of the scene in *Iliad* 24 where Hermes, disguised as the squire of Achilles, puts the Greek guards to sleep and opens the door to let in Priam to see Achilles [*Il.* 24.444–6]: οἱ δὲ νέον περὶ δόρπα φυλακτῆρες πονέοντο, / τοῖσι δ᾽ ἐφ᾽ ὕπνον ἔχευε διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης / πᾶσιν, ἄφαρ δ᾽ ὤϊξε πύλας, καὶ ἀπῶσεν ὀχῆας (Just as the sentries were busying themselves about their meal, on all of these the messenger Argeiphontes shed sleep, and immediately opened the gates, and thrust back the bars). But whereas Priam moves into danger on his entry into the Greek camp, the Bacchants move out of danger on their exit from the Indian city.

The Cycle of Dionysus IV: The Road to Olympus [40–8]

After the successful—and bloodless—resolution of the Indian War, Dionysus sets off on the road 'home'. The path to Olympus is long and winding, and takes him via Tyre [Book 40], Lebanon [Books 41–3], Thebes [Books 44–6], Athens, Naxos and Argos [Book 47], Thrace, Phrygia and Eleusis [Book 48]. Up until this point Nonnus' narrative has developed and sustained (with varying degrees of intensity) an allusive relationship with the mythological cycle. References to early episodes of Greek mythology were noted in Books 1–12. The story of the Trojan War in its early years was seen to have an important bearing on Books 13–24. Most recently we have observed

how Nonnus' presentation of the Indian War in Books 25–40 was profoundly influenced by Homer's Iliadic narrative. Nonnus' treatment of the mythological cycle up to this point leads us to assume that it will continue in a similar manner. We expect that Books 40–8 will engage allusively with the end of the mythological cycle, that Dionysus' post-Indian wanderings will provide us with an *Odyssey* to follow on from the *Iliad* of Books 25–40.

It is somewhat surprising, even disturbing, to discover the apparent lack of direct Odyssean influence in the final books of the Dionysiac Cycle. The most that critics have been able to do is to describe the general parallelism that exists between the wanderings of Dionysus and Odysseus: 'The *Odyssey* tells of wandering in distant lands and of its hero's determined struggle, in spite of divine opposition, for restoration to his rightful place. His return is delayed by a series of encounters, welcoming and hostile, in which the theme of hospitality and its abuse is prominent; and he at last achieves success through a combination of resourcefulness and traditional heroism. Nonnus' poem is clearly influenced by these aspects of the *Odyssey*'.[201] Such broad parallels add up to very little in terms of direct allusive engagement. After developing and sustaining engagement with the mythological cycle for forty books must we simply acknowledge that the poet breaks off that engagement? Are we to own up to a sudden collapse of cohesion and narrative drive, to agree with Rose in his assertion that, regardless of the intentions of Nonnus for his narrative, 'the poem trails off into a series of conventional adventures, military and amorous, each more tiring than the last, till finally a few concluding lines huddle Dionysos away to heaven'?[202] Before passing judgement on this matter, it is first important to consider the textual evidence, such as it is, for Odyssean allusion in Books 40–8, evidence which has not been hitherto collated. Only then will it be possible to venture an opinion about Nonnus' allusive practice in the final books of his epic.

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[201] Hopkinson (1994b) 18; see also Collart (1930) 272; Harries (1994) 64. And moreover, Odyssean allusion, where it does occur, is not entirely focused on the closing stages of the epic; see Hopkinson (1994b) 18: 'certain key aspects of the *Odyssey* can be shown to characterize not only the non-martial frame of the poem, but also its Iliadic central section'.

[202] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1.xvii; Hopkinson (1994c) 121 refers to these final books as 'a medley of Dionysiac myths'.

1. *Return from the East*

a) *Return of the heroes*

At the end of the Trojan War, the Greek warriors prepare for their return home. Their respective adventures and various fates were described in a whole series of mythological narratives, which appear in their earliest form as the epic poem entitled *Nostoi.*[203] Homer's narrative of the return of Odysseus was regarded as part of this mythological sequence, but stood very much on its own, as a distinct entity.[204]

The element of return in the narrative of Dionysus is first signalled in Book 40 after the fall of the Indian city [40.275–81]: καὶ στρατιῇ Διόνυσος ἐδάσσατο ληίδα χάρμης / λαὸν ὅλον συνάεθλον ὑπότροπον οἴκαδε πέμπων / Ἰνδῴην μετὰ δῆριν . . . / . . . / . . . παλιννόστῳ δὲ πορείῃ / κῶμον ἀνευάζοντες ἀνικήτῳ Διονύσῳ / πάντες ἐβακχεύοντο (So Dionysus distributed the spoils of battle among his followers, after the Indian War, and sent returning home the whole host who had shared his labours . . . their return was a triumphal march with universal acclaim to Dionysus the invincible, all revelled). The majority of Dionysus' troops return home safely [40.283–4]: καὶ ἕκαστος ἔχων ἀναθήματα νίκης / ὄψιμον εἰς δόμον ἦλθε παλίνδρομος (And each came returning home at last with his thank-offerings for victory). The Cretan Asterius alone does not return to his own country but decides to settle in Scythia, harbouring a hatred for Pasiphae and his father Minos [40.290–1]. The presentation of Asterius here accords with the established mythological tradition: there were certain heroes, we are told, who did not return home after Troy, but chose instead to settle in foreign countries.[205]

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[203] See Proclus, *Nostorum enarratio* 1–2 (*EGF* p. 67): Athena causes Agamemnon and Menelaus to quarrel about the voyage from Troy and Agamemnon stays to appease the goddess' anger; Diomedes and Nestor get safely home; Menelaus reaches Egypt with most of his ships destroyed; others go by land to Colophon; the ghost of Achilles tries to prevent Agamemnon from leaving; Locrian Ajax is killed on the rocks; Neoptolemus returns home; Agamemnon is murdered on his return home, and is avenged by Orestes and Pylades; Menelaus returns home.

[204] Proclus, *Telegoniae enarratio* 1 (*EGF* p. 72); cf. Huxley (1969) 162: 'The most striking feature of the summary of the *Nostoi* or *Returns* in the *Chestomathy* is the neglect of Odysseus, who is mentioned only as having met Neoptolemos at Maroneia in Thrace. The omission of the hero of the *Odyssey* looks deliberate; Odysseus, it seems, had already received his due meed of praise in the *Odyssey* when the *Nostoi* summarized by Proklos was composed. The *Nostoi* therefore heeded the adventures of other heroes and left the tale of Odysseus alone'.

[205] Apollod. *Epit.* 6.15: ὅτι πλανηθέντες Ἕλληνες ἄλλοι ἀλλαχοῦ κατάραντες

The *nostos* of Dionysus which Nonnus now proceeds to relate can be seen more precisely as consisting of a number of different *nostoi*, staging-posts along the way to his ultimate apotheosis. His journey takes him through a series of homes: through Tyre, the home of his ancestor Europa; Thebes, the home of his mother Semele; Phrygia, the home of his foster-mother Rhea; until finally he reaches his true home in heaven. In contrast to the heroes of Greece, Dionysus is not concerned merely with returning home. He still has a mission to fulfil: to initiate the world into the mystery of wine. For this reason, after a skirmish in the Caucasus he revisits Arabia [40.294–7]: ἦχι θαμίζων / λαὸν ἀβακχεύτων Ἀράβων ἐδίδαξεν ἀείρειν / μυστιπόλους νάρθηκας· ἀεξιφύτοιο δὲ λόχμης / Νύσια βοτρυόεντι κατέστεφεν οὔρεα καρπῷ (where he stayed and taught the Arabian people who knew not Bacchus to uplift the mystic fennel, and crowned the Nysian hills with the vineclusters of his fruitful plant).[206]

b) *Contest for Beroe*

In Book 41 Dionysus enters the land of Lebanon, and Nonnus tells the story of the city of Beirut. In this story Dionysus and Poseidon both fall in love with the maiden Beroe and compete for her favours. The competition reaches its climax in Book 43 when a full-scale sea-battle takes place between Dionysus and Poseidon:

> καὶ θεὸς ὑγρομέδων ἐκορύσσετο· Νηρεΐδων δέ
> ἦν κλόνος· ἰκμαλέοι δὲ θαλασσαίων ἀπὸ νώτων
> δαίμονες ἐστρατόωντο· τανυπτόρθοις δὲ κορύμβοις
> δῶμα Ποσειδάωνος ἱμάσσετο, πόντιον ὕδωρ·
> καὶ χθονίου λοφόεντος ἀρασσομένου κενεῶνος
> ἡμερίδες Λιβάνοιο μετοχλίζοντο τριαίνῃ.
>
> (Meanwhile, the lord of the waters prepared for conflict. There was confusion among the Nereids; the deities of the waters came from the stretches of the sea to form array. Poseidon's house, the water of the sea, was flogged with long bunches of leaves; the caverns of the mountain were shaken by the trident and the vines of Lebanon were rooted up.) [43.34–9]

κατοικοῦσιν, οἱ μὲν εἰς Λιβύην, οἱ δὲ εἰς Ἰταλίαν . . . (After their wanderings the Greeks landed and settled in various countries, some in Libya, some in Italy . . .).

[206] Zeus made the teaching of viticulture a precondition of Dionysus' entry into heaven [13.6–7].

The contest for the hand of a girl in marriage encourages of general analogy with the Odyssean contest of the suitors for the hand of Penelope.[207] But there is perhaps a more striking frame of reference. Following their departure from Troy, a large part of the Greek fleet is caught up in a ruinous storm stirred up by Athena on account of the impiety of Ajax son of Oileus.[208] In Book 43 Dionysus is himself caught up in dramatic storm—though this time the cause is not impiety but love. Nonnus' storm of love can, I think, be seen as an equivalent/alternative version of the storm that besets the returning Greek heroes. A comparison with the description of the Greek storm in Quintus' account certainly reveals a broad equivalence of details.[209]

Within the storm narrative of Book 43 there is one particular mythological allusion which helps to locate us in the 'nostic' part of the cycle. At 43.365–8 the nymph Psamathe utters the following prayer: μὴ Θέτις αἰολόδακρυς ὑποδρήσσειε Λυαίῳ, / δμωίδα μή μιν ἴδοιμι παρ' ἀβροβίων, χθόνα Λυδῶν / ὀψομένην μετὰ πόντον, <u>'Αχιλλέι</u>, <u>Πηλέι</u>, <u>Πύρρῳ</u>, / <u>υἱωνόν</u>, <u>πόσιν</u>, <u>υἷα μιῇ στενάχουσαν ἀνίῃ</u> (Let not Thetis in floods of tears be servant to Lyaius, let me not see her a slave to Bromius, leaving the deep to look on the Lydian land, lamenting in

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[207] Dionysus' character takes on shades of Odysseus at 42.358: καί οἱ ἑὸν γένος εἶπε καὶ οὔνομα (he told her his name and family).

[208] Apollod. *Epit.* 6.5: οἱ δὲ ἀνάγονται καὶ περὶ Τῆνον χειμάζονται. 'Αθηνᾶ γὰρ ἐδεήθη Διὸς τοῖς Ἕλλησι χειμῶνα ἐπιπέμψαι. καὶ πολλαὶ νῆες βυθίζονται . . . (But the others put to sea and encountered a storm at Tenos; for Athena entreated Zeus to send a tempest against the Greeks; and many ships foundered); Proclus, *Nostorum enarratio* 18–19 (*EGF* p. 67) εἶθ' ὁ περὶ τὰς Καφηρίδας πέτρας δηλοῦται χειμῶν καὶ ἡ Αἴαντος φθορὰ τοῦ Λοκροῦ (The storm at the rocks called Capherides is then described along with the end of Locrian Aias); cf. Quint. Smyrn. 14.419ff.

[209] As we read in Quintus' account, many of the Greek sailors meet a watery death [Quint. Smyrn. 14.539–40]; so Poseidon calls for the forces of Dionysus to be drowned in the sea [43.157–62]. In both accounts mountain caverns are shaken by the trident [43.38–9; Quint. Smyrn. 14.481–3]; Zeus concentrates all the water from the streams of Mount Ida into one channel [Quint. Smyrn. 14.640–1]; in Nonnus' version rivers enter the fray [43.286ff.]. Ajax is finally killed when Poseidon crushes him under a mountain peak [Quint. Smyrn. 14.585–7]; lumps of rock fly around in Book 43: [43.222–4]. In the closing section of Quintus' account, the vengeful prayers of a grieving Trojan are heard and granted by the god Poseidon [Quint. Smyrn. 14.614ff.]; so the contest for Beroe is concluded when Zeus hears and answers the prayers of a grieving Nereid [43.361ff.]. The presence of Proteus at 43.255ff. may possibly evoke a resonance of the *nostos* of Menelaus: driven by storm to Egypt, and stranded far from home, the Greek hero had to wrestle with the shape-shifting Proteus in order to learn how he might escape (as described in *Odyssey* 4, a narrative which 'presupposes much traditional knowledge of the adventures of heroes returning from Troy' Huxley (1969) 162).

one agony Achilles, Peleus, Pyrrhus, grandson, husband, and son). The reference points to a time in Thetis' life when three generations of her loved ones have already gone to their death. As we know, Achilles died at Troy, whilst Peleus and Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus died in Greece at a later date—or so it is recorded in Apollodorus' account of the *nostos* of Neoptolemus.[210] This allusion then encourages us to look beyond the time of the Trojan War and into the narratives of the returning heroes.

2. *Dionysus in Greece*

a) *Icarius the gardener*

Book 47 opens with Dionysus' triumphant arrival in Athens, and his hospitable welcome at the house of Icarius [47.34ff.]. The main literary model for this scene derives, in all likelihood, from the *Erigone* of Eratosthenes.[211] Yet this does not seem to be the only model at work here. In general terms, the arrival of a hero at the home of a peasant worker recalls the arrival of Odysseus at the hut of Eumaeus upon his return to Ithaca [*Odyssey* 14].[212] More pointedly, 'the old and industrious gardener'—γέρων φυτοεργὸς ἀλωεύς [47.58; 70]—to whom Dionysus gives the gift of wine seems to recall another elderly character from the end of the *Odyssey*: the hero's father, Laertes.

After his return to Ithaca, Odysseus pays a visit to his father on his humble country estate, and finds him working in his 'fruitful orchard' [*Od.* 24.221]: πολυκάρπου ἀλωῆς. He praises the old man's hard work and horticultural achievements [*Od.* 24.244–7]: ὦ γέρον, οὐκ ἀδαημονίη σ' ἔχει ἀμφιπολεύειν / ὄρχατον, ἀλλ' εὖ τοι κομιδὴ ἔχει, οὐδέ τι πάμπαν, / οὐ φυτόν, οὐ συκέη, οὐκ ἄμπελος, οὐ μὲν ἐλαίη, / οὐκ ὄγχνη, οὐ πρασιή τοι ἄνευ κομιδῆς κατὰ κῆπον (Old man, no lack of skill

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[210] Apollod. *Epit.* 6.13: Πηλέως δὲ ἐκ Φθίας ἐκβληθέντος ὑπὸ τῶν 'Ακάστου παίδων καὶ ἀποθανόντος, Νεοπτόλεμος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ πατρὸς παρέλαβε (And when Peleus was expelled from Phthia by the sons of Acastus and died, Neoptolemus succeeded to his father's kingdom); Apollod. *Epit.* 6.14: καὶ μανέντος 'Ορέστου ἁρπάζει τὴν ἐκείνου γυναῖκα 'Ερμιόνην κατηγγυημένην αὐτῷ πρότερον ἐν Τροίᾳ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐν Δελφοῖς ὑπὸ 'Ορέστου κτείνεται (And when Orestes went mad, Neoptolemus carried off his wife Hermione, who had previously been betrothed to him in Troy; for that reason he was slain by Orestes at Delphi).

[211] See Solmsen (1947); Rosokoki (1995). The scene of rustic hospitality, too, shows the influence of Callimachus' *Hecale*; see Hollis (1990) 345ff. The names of both Icarius and his daughter Erigone have other literary resonances: Icarius was the father of Penelope; Erigone was the daughter of Aegisthus, married to Orestes in the *Nostoi*.

[212] See Hollis (1990) 343.

in tending a garden besets you; on the contrary, your care is good, and there is nothing whatsoever, either plant, or fig tree or vine, no, or olive, or pear, or garden plot in all the field that lacks care). Icarius cuts a similar figure, as the best nurseryman in Attica [47.35–6]: ὃς πέλεν ἄλλων / φέρτερος ἀγρονόμων ἑτερότροπα δένδρα φυτεύειν ([Icarius] excelled the other countrymen in planting new sorts of trees). But there is one 'tree' which has a natural place in Laertes' orchard which is as yet unknown to Icarius—the vine—ἄμπελος. It is this gap which Dionysus now fills [47.66–7]: ἀγρονόμῳ δὲ γέροντι φυτηκόμος ὤπασε δαίμων / κλήματα βοτρυόεντα (Then the plant-loving god presented to the old countryman shoots of the vine).

Icarius now propagates the vine and introduces it to his neighbours; but they believe they have been poisoned by the new-made wine and beat the old man to death [47.116ff.]. This scene can hardly be said to develop the allusion to Laertes, and yet, Homeric resonance may not be entirely lacking. The brutal murder of the old man sustains certain parallels with the murder of the suitors in *Odyssey* 23. The victims of both incidents have their heads beaten in [47.128–9]: βαρυνομένου δὲ καρήνου / ἀγρονόμων πληγῇσιν ἀμοιβαίῃσι τυπέντος (His head sank under a shower of blows from the countrymen),[213] [*Od.* 24.184–5]: . . . τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' ἀεικὴς / κράτων τυπτομένων (from them rose hideous groaning, as heads were struck). In both cases the bodies lie uncared for by their relatives for a period of time,[214] and in both cases the ghosts of the dead men describe the manner of their demise.[215]

b) *Last battle*

Following his sojourn in Athens, and an erotic interlude on the island of Naxos (where he acquires Ariadne as a wife), Dionysus ventures to Argos, the city of Hera. Here he receives a hostile welcome and enters battle against the city's favourite hero, Perseus.[216] In general

[213] Cf. 47.158.

[214] In the words of the spirit of Amphimedon [*Od.* 24.186–8]: . . . ὧν ἔτι καὶ νῦν / σώματ' ἀκηδέα κεῖται ἐνὶ μεγάροις 'Οδυσῆος· / οὐ γάρ πω ἴσασι φίλοι κατὰ δώμαθ' ἑκάστου . . . (. . . even now our bodies still lie uncared for in the halls of Odysseus; for our friends in each man's home know nothing as yet . . .). Erigone searches vainly for the body of her father at 47.193–211.

[215] The spirit of Icarius speaks to Erigone at 47.161–86; Amphimedon speaks to Agamemnon at *Od.* 24.184–8.

[216] The Argives refuse to welcome Dionysus on account of their reverence for Hera and the hero Perseus. In revenge Dionysus sends madness on the Argive women. One character articulates his rejection of the god, asserting that Perseus is

terms, the wrath of Hera towards Dionysus suggests analogy with the anger of Poseidon which keeps Odysseus away from home for so long.[217] It may be possible, however, to discern in this scene a more specific Homeric resonance.

During the course of the fighting, Ariadne, the young bride of Dionysus, is literally petrified by the head of Medusa. Her husband reacts with understandable anger:

> καὶ πλέον ἔβρεμε Βάκχος ἰδὼν πετρώδεα νύμφην·
> καί νύ κεν Ἄργος ἔπερσε καὶ ἐπρήνιξε Μυκήνας
> καὶ Δαναῶν ἤμησεν ὅλην στίχα, καί νύ κεν αὐτήν
> μαρναμένην ἄγνωστον ἀνούτατον οὔτασεν Ἥρην
> μάντιος ἀντιτύποιο νόθῃ βροτοειδέι μορφῇ,
> καί νύ κεν ὠκυπέδιλος ὑπὲρ μόρον ἔφθιτο Περσεύς,
> εἰ μή μιν κατόπισθε φανεὶς πτερόεντι πεδίλῳ
> χρυσείης πλοκαμῖδος ἑλὼν ἀνεσείρασεν Ἑρμῆς . . .

> (Bacchus was even more furious when he saw his bride all stone. He would have sacked Argos and razed Mycenae to the ground and mowed down the whole host of Danaans, yes even wounded invulnerable Hera herself, who was fighting unrecognized in the false borrowed shape of a mortal, a seer, and Swiftshoe Perseus would have perished, fate or no fate,—but Hermes appeared behind him with winged shoes and pulled him back by his golden hair . . .)
>
> [47.667–74]

This scene of fierce anger restrained by a divine force encourages analogy with a episode from the very end of the *Odyssey*, when, after the massacre of the suitors, the Ithacans meet together for a final battle:

> ἐν δ' ἔπεσον προμάχοις Ὀδυσεὺς καὶ φαίδιμος υἱός,
> τύπτον δὲ ξίφεσίν τε καὶ ἔγχεσιν ἀμφιγύοισι.
> καί νύ κε δὴ πάντας ὄλεσαν καὶ ἔθηκαν ἀνόστους,
> εἰ μὴ Ἀθηναίη, κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
> ἤϋσεν φωνῇ, κατὰ δ' ἔσχεθε λαὸν ἅπαντα.

better than Dionysus: if Dionysus once turned a ship to stone, Perseus turned a whole sea-monster to stone [47.507–9]. In *Odyssey* 13 the Phaeacians restore Odysseus to Ithaca, but since this runs counter to Poseidon's efforts to delay Odysseus' return, their ship is turned to stone as punishment [*Od.* 13.162–4]: τῆς δὲ σχεδὸν ἦλθ' ἐνοσίχθων, / ὅς μιν λᾶαν θῆκε καὶ ἐρρίζωσεν ἔνερθε / Χειρὶ καταπρηνεῖ ἐλάσας (Then near her came the Earth-shaker and turned her into stone, and rooted her fast beneath by a blow of the flat of his hand).

[217] Cf. 48.4–6: οὐδὲ χόλον πρήυνε παλίγκοτον Ἰναχὶς Ἥρη / Ἄργεος οἰστρηθέντος, Ἀχαιιάδων δὲ γυναικῶν / λύσσης μνῆστιν ἔχουσα πάλιν θωρήσσετο Βάκχῳ (But Inachian Hera had not softened her rancorous rage for Argos maddened; she remembered the frenzy of the Achaean women and prepared again to attack Bacchus).

(Then on the foremost fighters fell Odysseus and his glorious son and thrust at them with swords and double-edged spears. And now they would have killed them all, and cut them off from returning, had not Athene, daughter of Zeus, who bears the aegis, shouted aloud, and held back all the fighters.)

[*Od.* 24.526–30]

In both scenes the heroes are on the point of annihilating their opponents; but in both scenes they are restrained[218] by the timely intervention of a deity.[219] In Nonnus' version Hermes has replaced Athena; however, Athena is not *entirely* absent from this scene: Hermes' attempt to stop the battle by pulling Dionysus' hair exploits a direct allusion to Athena and her reaction to the anger of Achilles at *Il.* 1.197: στῆ δ' ὄπιθεν, ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἕλε Πηλείωνα (She stood behind him, and caught the son of Peleus by his tawny hair). Nonnus' subtle blending of allusion creates an ironic connection between the beginning of the *Iliad* and the end of the *Odyssey*. The self-conscious substitution of Hermes for Athena, also suggests an attempt to add relevance to the allusion. Athena was the patron goddess of Odysseus not of Dionysus; it is the god Hermes then, close ally of Dionysus throughout the epic, who here takes over her protective role.

Further analogy between the battles in Argos and Ithaca is suggested by the speech of Hermes [47.682–3]: γνωτέ, μάχην εὔνησον ὁμόγνιον· ἀμφότεροι γάρ / Περσεὺς καὶ Διόνυσος ἑνὸς βλάστημα τοκῆος (Brother, still this feud of brothers—for both Perseus and Dionysus are offspring of one sire). The emphasis on kinship is consonant with the kinship of the combatants on Ithaca: they are not foreigners but fellow islanders: Ἰθακήσιοι [*Od.* 24.531]. In both cases the conflict ends not with recrimination, but reconciliation. Before Hermes returns to heaven he 'mingled a league of friendship between Perseus and Dionysus' [47.714–15]: εἰς πόλον αὖτις ἵκανεν, ἐπ' <u>ἀμφοτέροισι</u> κεράσσας / <u>θεσμὸν</u>

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[218] Cf. Dionysus' self-restraint during his battle with the giants at 48.87–9: <u>καί νύ κε πάντας ἔπεφνεν</u> ἑῷ ῥηξήνορι θύρσῳ, / ἀλλὰ παλινδίνητος ἑκὼν ἀνεχάζετο χάρμης, / δυσμενέας ζώοντας ἑῷ γενετῆρι φυλάσσων (Indeed he would have slain all with his manbreaking thyrsus, if he had not retired of his own will out of the fray and left enemies alive for his father). The relationship between Dionysus and Zeus (where the son asserts his independence from his father) invites comparison with the relationship between Telemachus and Odysseus at the end of the *Odyssey*: see *Od.* 24.505–15.

[219] In both episodes a god joins the ranks of the fighters in disguise as a mortal: Hera fights in the guise of the prophet Melampus [47.671; 685–6]; Athena fights in the guise of the Ithacan Mentor [*Od.* 24.502–3].

ὁμοφροσύνης καὶ Περσέι καὶ Διονύσῳ; in a similar way, Athena reconciles the warring islanders [*Od.* 24.546–7]: ὅρκια δ' αὖ κατόπισθε μετ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔθηκε / Παλλὰς 'Αθηναίη (Then for the future a solemn truce between the two sides was made by Pallas Athena).

c) *Slaughter of the suitors*

Once the Argive battle is over, Dionysus begins his onward advance to Phrygia, but finds himself delayed in Thrace by the wrestler-maiden Pallene.[220] Her incestuous father, Sithon, has promised to marry her to any suitor who can beat her in a wrestling contest, but he has kept his daughter from marriage by murdering all the suitors who come to his door—until the arrival of Dionysus [48.95–8]: ἀμετρήτους δὲ δαΐζων / μελλογάμους μνηστῆρας ἀπέθρισεν, ὧν ὑπὸ λύθρῳ / κτεινομένων καναχηδὸν ἐφοινίσσοντο παλαῖστραι, / εἰσόκε Βάκχος ἵκανε Δίκης πρόμος (Wooers innumerable who would have wed her he killed, a great harvest of them; the places of wrestling were noisy with their murders and red with their blood, until Bacchus came as the champion of Justice).[221] This story of the murder of suitors provides a startling analogue to the murder of the suitors in *Odyssey* 22. The heroes of both episodes (Odysseus the returning husband; Dionysus the husband-to-be) function alike as the agents of justice.

Whereas Odysseus has to win back his bride by participating in a contest of physical prowess—the stringing and shooting of the bow,[222] Dionysus must win his bride in a similarly physical contest—a wrestling match [48.102]. As Odysseus enters the contest in the disguise of a beggar, so Dionysus disguises his own divine power, pretending to be a mere mortal [48.136–7]: καὶ ἔκαμνε δολοπλόκον ἄσθμα τιταίνων / ὡς βροτός, ἀμβολίῃ δὲ θελήμονι κάλλιπε νίκην (He used all his guile, panting with labouring breath, as if he were a mortal, delaying victory on purpose). After his victory with the bow, and before he can be properly reunited with his wife, Odysseus kills the

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[220] Eros promised that Dionysus would marry Pallene at 43.432–4.

[221] This scene may also allude to Theseus' encounter with the wrestler Cercyon, as featured in Callimachus' *Hecale*; see Hollis (1976) 143.

[222] *Od.* 21.74–8: θήσω γὰρ μέγα τόξον 'Οδυσσῆος θείοιο· / ὃς δέ κε ῥηΐτατ' ἐντανύσῃ βιὸν ἐν παλάμῃσι / καὶ διοϊστεύσῃ πελεκέων δυοκαίδεκα πάντων, / τῷ κεν ἅμ' ἑσποίμην νοσφισσαμένη τόδε δῶμα / κουρίδιον (I will set as your contest the great bow of godlike Odysseus, and whoever shall most easily string the bow in his hands and shoot an arrow through all twelve axes, with him I will go, and forsake the house of my wedded life).

suitors who are assembled in his house; he emerges from the carnage 'covered with their blood and gore' [*Od.* 22.401]: αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον. In the Nonnian episode the ground is already covered with gore—[48.96]: λύθρῳ—even before the contest has started. After his victory in the wrestling match, and prior to his marriage with Pallene, Dionysus kills Sithon [48.183–7]: ἀλλ' ὅτε νυμφοκόμοιο πάλης ἐτέλεσσεν ἀγῶνα / Βάκχος ἔτι στάζων γαμίους ἱδρῶτας ἀέθλων / Σιθόνα μὲν πρήνιξε τετυμμένον ὀξέι θύρσῳ, / μνηστήρων ὀλετῆρα, κυλινδομένου δὲ κονίῃ / κούρῃ θύρσον ἔδωκε μιαιφόνον ἕδνον ἐρώτων (But when Bacchus had ended the wrestling match for his bride, still dripping with the sweat of his wedding contest he struck down Sithon with a stab of his sharp thyrsus, Sithon the murderer of wooers; and as the father rolled in the dust he gave his daughter the thyrsus that slew him, as a love-gift). Sithon, the killer of suitors? For a moment, in Nonnus' macabre rematch, it is not Dionysus, but Sithon whom we now see in the role of Odysseus, the ὀλετῆρα μνηστήρων *par excellence.*

Once the contest is over Dionysus is able to spend time with his new wife [48.236–7]: καὶ γαμίης δήθυνεν ἐπὶ χρόνον ἐγγύθι νύμφης / τερπόμενος φιλότητι νεοζυγέων ὑμεναίων (And he lingered for some time beside his wedded bride, taking his joy in the love of this new marriage). Similarly, after the slaughter of the suitors, Odysseus is able to spend time with *his* wife [*Od.* 23.300–1]: τὼ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλότητος ἐταρπήτην ἐρατεινῆς, / τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντε (But when the two had had their fill of the joy of love, they took delight in tales, speaking each to the other). However, neither the story of Odysseus nor of Dionysus is destined to end in the bedroom.

d) *Apotheosis of Dionysus*

It is well known that the cycle of Greek mythology did not end with the return of Odysseus to Ithaca, and his reunion with Penelope. As hinted at in the *Odyssey*, and 'originally' narrated in the *Telegony*, further adventures await the hero.[223] After a second period of wandering he is accidentally killed by Telegonus, his illegitimate son by the goddess Circe. A double-wedding then sees Telemachus and Telegonus married with Circe and Penelope, and immortality bestowed upon them all.[224] A comparison of this narrative with the end of Nonnus'

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[223] Davies (1989) 87.

[224] Proclus, *Telegoniae enarratio* (*EGF* pp. 72–3); *Telegoniae enarratio* 20–1 (*EGF* p. 73):

Dionysiac Cycle may not be without value, since the themes of paternity, marriage and apotheosis are common to both.

In the closing stages of the *Dionysiaca*, the hero seduces yet another girl and becomes the father of a baby boy called Iacchus. Unlike Odysseus, he takes responsibility for his son and legitimates the relationship between them by enshrining him in the ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries [48.951ff.]. Alongside concerns for the legitimate reception of Iaccus, the theme of marriage is brought suddenly back into focus, when, at the eleventh hour, Dionysus remembers his dead departed wife Ariadne; placing her crown in the sky as an advertisement of their loving marriage [48.973]: . . . ἄγγελον οὐ λήγοντα φιλοστεφάνων ὑμεναίων (an everlasting proclaimer of garlanded wedding). Finally, at the climax of the story of Dionysus, the hero shares the same fate as those who appear at the very end of the cycle of Greek myth: apotheosis [48.974–5]: καὶ θεὸς ἀμπελόεις πατρώιον αἰθέρα βαίνων / πατρὶ σὺν εὐώδινι μιῆς ἔψαυσε τραπέζης (Then the vinegod ascended into his father's heaven, and touched one table with the father who had brought him to birth).

The evidence for Nonnus' use of the *Odyssey* and the narratives which bring the cycle of Greek mythology to a close have now been considered. It should be clear that the poet's allusive engagement with the wanderings of Odysseus and the returning heroes is quite different from anything we have seen before. In this respect, Books 40–8 present a very real challenge to our understanding of Nonnus' allusive procedures. His engagement with the cycle of mythology—which has been moving towards a new level of intensity during the books of the *Indiad*—appears to have come to a sudden and abrupt end. The presentation of Odyssean allusion in these last books looks like a pitiful non-event, the dampest of squibs. Here seems to be the reason why Vian chose to end his sketch of Nonnus' Trojan Cycle with the fall of the city and not with the story of the hero's return; for it appears that Nonnus does not engage with the closing part of the cycle to any significant or convincing degree.

Yet we should not be quite so hasty in abandoning the challenge of understanding Nonnus' allusive programme in these books. I would suggest that there is a different way of reading Books 40–8 which

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ἐκβοηθήσας δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ παιδὸς ἀναιρεῖται κατ' ἄγνοιαν (Odysseus comes to help but is killed unwittingly by his son); Proclus, *Telegoniae enarratio* 24 (*EGF* p. 73): ἡ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀθανάτους ποιεῖ (she makes them immortal).

can restore to them a new force and even cohesion. In the discussion of the 'battle of the ships' in Book 39, we saw the importance of context in understanding Nonnus' allusive programme. Nonnus' reworking of the *Iliad* created certain narrative expectations. Nonnus exploited the expected juxtaposition between a scene of watery carnage and the death of the enemy leader, by providing an equivalent scene of watery slaughter. Despite the radical difference between the two scenes, then, the ναυμαχία in Book 39 demanded to be read as an equivalent/alternative version of the μάχη παραποτάμιος in *Iliad* 21, precisely because both scenes are followed by the climactic death of the enemy chieftain. In a similar way, the allusive mythological cycle which has unfolded throughout the first forty books creates certain inevitable expectations in the mind of the reader: after the narrative of the Trojan War the reader expects, and is prepared for, a narrative of return, an equivalent version of the *Odyssey*.

But as we have seen, the 'expected' narrative failed to materialize: there is no Dionysiac *Odyssey* to follow on from the Dionysiac *Iliad*. It is, however, a fundamental mistake to assume (as many critics have done) that Nonnus' failure to produce the *expected* version of the *Odyssey* means the failure and collapse of his whole narrative programme, the abandonment of the Dionysiac Cycle. I believe that we should see these last eight books not as a failed attempt at sustained allusive engagement, but a bold (and indeed successful) attempt to strike out on a *new* narrative course. The lack of allusion to the *Odyssey* does not mean the failure of the Dionysiac Cycle, but its evolution. I would suggest that Nonnus is conscious of the expectation that his last eight books have created, and that he actively subverts and frustrates such expectation. In this way the poet forces us to recognize the profound change which has taken place in his allusive strategies.

Nonnus' change of tack, his new allusive programme, should be seen in terms of his relationship with Homer. After direct engagement with Homer's Iliadic narrative, an expectation is generated that the poet will continue in this same vein, and engage directly with Homer's Odyssean narrative. Aware of the expectation he has created, Nonnus moves markedly and deliberately away from his model. This poetic development, a movement away from imitation and towards originality, will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter. For the moment it will be sufficient to acknowledge that it marks an important stage, a turning point in the development of Nonnian epic: after a Dionysiac *Iliad* comes a bold and daringly original venture: an Odyssean *Dionysiaca*.

This chapter has made a detailed investigation of the ways in which mythological allusion is presented and deployed throughout the *Dionysiaca*. Far from the chaotic, even random, use of quotation, reference, and allusion to illustrate specific moments in the narrative of Dionysus, it has been seen that Nonnus' use of mythological allusion has a more significant function within the narrative as a whole. At the same time that Nonnus narrates the exploits of Dionysus, he undertakes to tell, by way of extended and sustained allusion, his own version of the mythological cycle which moves from the creation of the world to the end of the age of heroes.[225]

Nonnus' engagement with the stories of the Trojan War in Books 13–40 has long been noted, but has been the subject of little detailed investigation. Building on the brief, yet suggestive, analysis by Francis Vian, this chapter has shown how the first twelve books of the Indian War [13–24] should be viewed as Nonnus' response to the traditional stories of the Trojan War which come *before* Homer's Iliadic narrative: the plan of Zeus, assembly at Aulis, disembarkation at Troy (to name three of the most prominent scenes). It is the remaining books of the Indian War [25–40] which, I have argued, should be distinguished as Nonnus' full-scale response to the narrative of the *Iliad*, his own *Indiad*. A close investigation of Nonnus' narrative technique in these books reveals the full extent of his engagement with the narrative of the *Iliad*. Nonnus has not merely attempted to reproduce certain well-known Homeric episodes within his own narration of the Indian War. Rather, Books 25–40 should be seen as an attempt to incorporate the whole of Homer's narrative into a new Dionysiac context; it is a sustained attempt, yet one that should be seen as neither rigid nor 'over-determined'.

Importantly, Nonnus' use of mythology in Books 13–40 has now been contextualized with the rest of the poem. The first twelve books of the *Dionysiaca* engage with a matrix of allusions to early episodes in the cycle of Greek mythology which lead on to, and prepare the way for, the story of the Trojan War. The epic thus opens with an episode of theogamy and titanomachy [1–2]; it moves on through a period of Argonautic wanderings [3–5]; and narrates the birth and early years of the hero Dionysus in a manner reminiscent of the

[225] Cf. Toohey (1992) 228: 'The *Dionysiaca* breaks all the rules: *it is at once both compendious and specific*, it blends romance, sexual innuendo, and religion, the heroic with the non-heroic, the humorous with the serious' [my emphasis].

story of Achilles, prior to his appearance in the Trojan War. It is the last eight books [40–8] which represent the greatest challenge to any reader of the *Dionysiaca*. Direct engagement with the cycle of mythology appears to come to an abrupt halt: only the faintest and most general of parallels between the wanderings of Dionysus and Odysseus have been discerned. As this chapter has most recently shown, the lack of direct allusion to the narrative of Odysseus should not be seen as a failure on the part of Nonnus, but as a conscious part of the poet's narrative strategy. Readers are invited to see Books 40–8 as a movement away from the expected allusive 'path' in a new, Dionysiac, direction.

The cycle of Dionysus described in this chapter has important implications for our understanding of Nonnus' relationship with two poets in particular: Pisander of Laranda and Homer. Vian represents the most recent thinking on the former of these: 'Nonnus imitates Pisander; but *instead of composing a universal history* he treats a single era of the world, an era inaugurated by Zeus's union with Europa and his victory over Typhon and concluded by the apotheosis of Dionysus'.[226] The investigation into Nonnus' allusive procedures, as carried out in this chapter, suggests that modern critics have crucially misunderstood Nonnus' relationship with Pisander: Nonnus has not rejected Pisander's universalizing tendencies, nor has he merely reworked certain parts of the Ἡρωϊκαὶ θεογαμίαι into his Dionysiac narrative. The poet of the *Dionysiaca* can now be seen to have composed both a universal *and* a specific history of the world. By the subtle manipulation of allusion he has found a way to cap the efforts of his predecessor, by telling two stories at once, where Pisander had told only one. If John Philoponus was right,[227] and if Pisander's retelling of the history of the world really did precipitate the demise of the original Epic Cycle, then perhaps we might speculate that Nonnus' Dionysiac Cycle did the same for Pisander.

In the creation of a Dionysiac Cycle, in the containment of a vast and truly encyclopedic range of mythological allusion within his poem, there is one specific source, one target who remains always before Nonnus' eyes: Homer. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represented an entire mythological cycle in their own right; the rest of the cycle of Greek mythology merely an attempt

[226] Vian (1994a) 86 [my emphasis].
[227] *EGF* p. 14. See p. 29.

to fill in the 'gaps', to tell in full what Homer had told by suggestion, allusion and nuance. The forty-eight books of Nonnus' epic form a direct and provocative response to the greatest of epic models, an attempt to match, and even surpass, the range and scope of Homer's poems through the creation of a cosmic, universal, epic. If Homer was the fountain of all knowledge and life, then here at last, in the *Dionysiaca* was a rival source: an inspiration (as we are yet to appreciate fully) consisting not of water, but of wine.

But before we turn to the inspiration of Dionysiac wine, and to a more detailed investigation of the poetic relationship between Nonnus and Homer, I would like to draw some closing observations concerning Nonnus' relationship with the poet Ovid, and the whole tradition of Latin poetry. Clear similarities between the *Dionysiaca* and the *Metamorphoses*—a shared interest in the theme of metamorphosis and frequent treatment of the same mythological subject matter—have led some critics to assume a direct knowledge of Ovid on the part of the later Greek poet.[228] The findings of this chapter, namely that Nonnus has written a compendious, universalizing epic, would seem to corroborate further the argument in favour of a relationship between the two poets: the *Metamorphoses* is comprehensive not only in terms of chronology and subject matter,[229] but also in terms of literary genres.[230]

In spite of the striking similarities which do exist between the two epics (and which make for much useful comparison) it must be pointed out that there exists no definitive evidence for Nonnus' familiarity with Ovid.[231] Indeed, it is by no means certain that Nonnus read any Latin literature at all.[232] Knox's 1988 article on 'Phaethon

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[228] See especially Braune (1935) who suggested correspondences with Ovid in the episodes of Phaethon, Cadmus, Daphne and Actaeon.

[229] It begins with an open declaration of its universal epic programme [*Met.* 1.3–4]: . . . *primaque ab origine mundi / ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.*

[230] The *Metamorphoses* embraces epyllion, tragedy, hymns, elegy, pastoral and epigram; see, for example, Solodow (1988) 17–25. On Nonnus' analogous treatment of a broad range of genres see Harries (1994) 64; Hollis (1994b) 46.

[231] D'Ippolito (1964) 75 suggests that Nonnus may have read Ovid (and Virgil) and consciously disguised his debt to them.

[232] See Hopkinson (1994b) 3: 'it seems unlikely that Nonnus would have been well enough read in Latin poetry to have been able to use or allude to it extensively'; see also Hollis (1994b) 60 n. 16 who accounts for the 'undeniable community of spirit between the two poems' through the possibility of 'a similar temperament and a liking for the same kinds of Hellenistic poetry'. Harries (1994) 64, Duc (1994)

in Ovid and Nonnus' reminds us exactly how tenuous are the claims concerning Nonnus' knowledge and imitation of Ovid and Latin poetry in general. He concludes as follows: 'The Roman poets had very clear reasons, rooted in the development of their culture, for their deep and fruitful interest in Greek poetry. The onus of proof continues to lie with those who maintain that Nonnus had a similar interest in Ovid'.[233] That no 'proof' has been advanced to challenge Knox's position since 1988 is hardly surprising. Nonnus, I would cautiously suggest, belonged to an élite literary coterie, steeped in the sophistication of Hellenistic poetry; whatever contact he may have had with the Latin language, the poetry of Ennius, Lucretius, Virgil and Ovid appears to have meant nothing to him. It is upon the city of Athens that his gaze is symbolically fixed,[234] not the city of Rome. And it is Homer, not Ovid (or Virgil) whom he calls by the name of father.[235]

38–42 and Frangoulis (1999) *passim* maintain the belief that Nonnus *was* familiar with Latin literary texts.

[233] Knox (1988) 551; see also (1989) 316: 'Latin literature was little known in the East and did not much interest the Greeks, few of whom, even among the élite, acquired more than a smattering of the language for legal or administrative purposes'.

[234] Dionysus enters Athens in Book 47; the epic reaches its climax at the Eleusis in the presence of Athena [48.951–68].

[235] 25.265. See pp. 116–19.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POET OF DIONYSUS

Introduction

> This poem never tires of examining and representing its own textual processes; its narrative is packed with legendary characters who are also figures of the poet.[1]

Recent work on Latin epic poetry has done much to focus attention on the figure of the epic poet and the ways in which he is 'embedded . . . in his own narrative'.[2] Literary critics have become increasingly conscious of the poet's own self-conscious participation in the action of his poem. Ecphrastic descriptions alert the reader to the artful construction of text; characters present themselves as potential doublets for the 'character' of the poet; the journey of the hero functions, in its entirety, as a suggestive allegory for the journey of the poet, from beginning to end.[3] But if this approach works well for interpretations of Latin epic poets,[4] it has been little explored with regard to the Greek poets of the later Roman empire.

This chapter will focus attention on the figure of Nonnus, and will examine the extent to which the poet of the *Dionysiaca* is embedded in his own narrative. It will be my contention that the quotation which stands as an epigraph to this chapter (and comes from a recent collection of essays on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) provides an appropriate description of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*. At every stage we will see a poem obsessed with its own textual processes, peopled with characters who participate in, and further encourage debate about, the right way to write an epic poem. Following on from the important work of Hopkinson and Harries, this chapter will show how the

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[1] Hardie, Barchiesi, Hinds eds. (1999) 10.

[2] Hardie (1993) 99.

[3] Cf. Hardie (1993) 119: '. . . the poet, as much as his heroes, is involved in a power-game for high stakes. If the hero must strive to be the best, or to win the world for his throne, the poet is always challenged to be supreme in the supreme genre'.

[4] Ovidian studies have been particularly active in this direction. See, for example, Leach (1974); Lateiner (1984); Hinds (1987); Harries (1990).

Dionysiaca tells both the story of the epic hero, and the epic poet Nonnus, and his own heroic attempt to write a Dionysiac epic.[5]

a) *Nonnus and Dionysus*

Before turning to a detailed metapoetic analysis of the narrative of Dionysus, it will be useful to consider the proemial section of Nonnus' epic, the poet's own preface to his work. It is here, during his opening invocation to the Muses, that Nonnus first establishes an analogy between himself and the subject of his song, Dionysus:[6]

> ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα, τινάξατε κύμβαλα, Μοῦσαι, / καὶ παλάμῃ δότε θύρσον ἀειδομένου Διονύσου.
>
> (Bring me the fennel, rattle the cymbals, you Muses! Put in my hand the wand of Dionysus whom I sing.)
>
> [1.11–12]
>
> ἄξατέ μοι νάρθηκα, Μιμαλλόνες, ὠμαδίην δέ / νεβρίδα ποικιλόνωτον ἐθήμονος ἀντὶ χιτῶνος / σφίγξατέ μοι στέρνοισι, Μαρωνίδος ἔμπλεον ὀδμῆς / νεκταρέης.
>
> (Bring me the fennel, Mimallons! On my shoulders, in place of the wonted kirtle, bind, I pray, tight over my breast a dapple-back fawnskin, full of the perfume of Maronian nectar.)
>
> [1.34–7]

In the words of Harries, 'the proem is about Nonnus becoming a Dionysiac poet'.[7] Unlike Hesiod, who took the laurel staff from the Muses on Mount Helicon, Nonnus has asked the Muses to come to him in Alexandria, to inspire him with the thyrsus of Dionysus and the mantle of a Bacchic celebrant. Right at the start of his epic, then, Nonnus has dissolved the traditional distance between epic poet and epic subject; he has entered into an open relationship with the subject of his poem.

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[5] See Hopkinson (1994b); Harries (1994).

[6] Most obviously, the birth of Nonnus' poem coincides with the birth of his subject (even though Dionysus does not appear in the narrative until Book 8). At this point, Nonnus' song could well be described, like the baby Dionysus as 'incomplete' [1.5]: ἡμιτέλεστον; cf. the programmatic use of this adjective at 24.322; see p. 170. Furthermore, as Dionysus' life begins with his near destruction, with a thunderbolt that almost kills him, so Nonnus' narrative begins on a similar note with the thunderbolts stolen from Zeus—[1.155–6]: ὅπλα Διὸς νιφόεντα Κίλιξ ἔκλεψε Τυφωεύς, / ὅπλα πυρός (Cilician Typhoeus stretched out his hands, and stole the snowy tools of Zeus, the tools of fire)—the thunder of epic creates so powerful and chaotic an impetus that it threatens to overwhelm Nonnus' poem before it is even begun.

[7] Harries (1994) 78; cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 9: 'Both poet and Muses are depicted as members of the Dionysiac *thiasos*'.

Nonnus' investiture as a Dionysiac poet encourages speculation that his own role as poet is in some sense complementary/analogous to that of the god of wine. Throughout the *Dionysiaca*, the poet certainly exploits the connections between wine and song. The two products are sweet;[8] and both are described as δόλοι,[9] capable of charming the mind of the recipient.[10] They appear naturally together in a sympotic environment, and are likely to encourage dance,[11] powerful erotic reactions,[12] and an insatiable desire for more.[13] At the prominent mid-way point of his epic, Nonnus steps forward to say that he will 'stir up a song for seven-gated Thebes' [25.11]: Θήβῃ δ' ἑπταπύλῳ κεράσω μέλος.[14] The metaphor mixes wine and song, and consciously blurs the boundaries between the two 'substances'. General connections between wine and song can now help us to understand better the parallels between Nonnus and his subject Dionysus. The wine of Dionysus and the poetry of Nonnus are to be seen as similar substances which promise to have a similarly beguiling effect on the reader/drinker.[15] The frequency of words which Nonnus uses to describe 'pouring' and 'mixing'[16] can only add

[8] An Attic farmer describes the drink in the following words [47.85]: καὶ μέλιτος γλυκεροῖο . . . γλυκερώτερον ὕδωρ (water sweeter than sweet honey); Galatea talks about the song of Polyphemus in similar terms [6.322]: καὶ γλυκερήν περ ἐοῦσαν ἔα Κύκλωπος ἀοιδήν (Let be the song of the Cyclops, though it is sweet). The close connection between wine and song is reinforced by the poet at the end of the farmer's speech [47.104–5]: ἔννεπε θαμβήσας γλυκερὸν ποτόν· ἐκ στομάτων δέ / ἡδυμανὴς ἀλάλαζε χέων ἄγραυλον ἀοιδήν (Thus he spoke, admiring the delicious drink; and from his lips rang out a stream of rustic song in sweet madness).

[9] E.g. 1.423 (song); 16.252 (wine).

[10] E.g. 19.256: νόον θέλγοντο (they charmed their minds); 2.13: θελγόμενος μελέεσσι (charmed by the melody).

[11] E.g. 5.88–9 (song); 18.149–51 (wine).

[12] A drunken satyr is seen racing after a nymph at 12.375–7; when Typhon is deceived by the singing of Cadmus, his reaction is compared to that of a young man aroused to love by a girl [1.525–6]: καὶ ὡς νέος ἡδέι κέντρῳ/ ἀβρὸς ἐρωμανέων ἐπιθέλγεται ἥλικι κούρῃ . . . (And as a lusty youth enamoured is bewitched by delicious thrills by the side of a girl of his own age).

[13] Typhon's reaction to the music of Cadmus is further compared to that of a young man who looks at a girl and 'will never have his fill' [1.532]: ἄγων ἀκόρητον ὀπωπήν. Similarly, one of the main qualities of wine is that it always leaves the drinker thirsting for more [19.258]: καὶ οὐ κόρος ἔσκε κυπέλλων (They could not get enough drink).

[14] This metaphor is not discussed by Gigli-Piccardi (1985).

[15] On the intoxicating effect of Nonnian poetry see pp. 207–13.

[16] Words for pouring and mixing appear in abundance throughout the text, suggesting the fluid nature of Nonnus' song. Consult Peek (1968–75) *ad loc.* for κεράννυμι and χέω/χεύω (and compounds).

support to the observation that '[w]ine is almost a metaphor for the *Dionysiaca* itself'.[17]

But the analogy needs further refinement. Dionysiac song and Nonnian wine are not just similar products; they are also similar in terms of their production and distribution. It is important to remember that Dionysus does not 'invent' wine until Book 12, and that it is an essential part of his mission to distribute this gift through all the nations of the world. In a similar manner, it is not until Book 12 that Nonnus 'invents' the Dionysiac poetic, a new approach to epic poetry which he will attempt to infuse into all the literary genres contained within his epic. The *Dionysiaca* therefore describes not merely a state of intoxication, but an actual process; it narrates the parallel missions of epic poet and epic subject: as Dionysus progresses towards heaven, introducing his gift of wine to the world, so Nonnus advances his own bid for literary immortality, infusing his Dionysiac poetic into the vast cycle of Greek mythology, literature and history.

b) *Nonnus and Homer*

There is a second strand to Nonnus' relationship with Dionysus which needs to be highlighted. The story that is about to unfold tells not only of Dionysus and his mission to bring wine to the world, but also of his anxious relationship with his father, Zeus. In a similar manner, Nonnus' journey towards literary immortality will centre around his relationship with *his* self-acknowledged father, Homer.[18] Hopkinson has provided an excellent encapsulation of the analogies between Nonnus and Dionysus as sons of powerful, and dominant fathers:

> Poetical affiliation is for [Nonnus] a living image. In striving to emulate yet escape, to be like yet unlike Homer, he works within that blend of imitation and anxiety, obedience and rebellion, which so often distinguish the offspring of famous fathers. The grand movement of the poem from Dionysus' new challenge to the established order, to the conquest of his chief rival, to his eventual reconciliation with and assumption into the pantheon, can be seen to reflect the relationship between the two poets.[19]

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[17] Toohey (1992) 223; cf. Braden (1974) 873: 'There is nothing in Nonnos' poem itself that will allow us to accept . . . wine convincingly as allegory, though that is clearly what, in some sense, it wants to be'.

[18] Homer is explicitly invoked as father at 25.265. Further references to Homer by name at 1.37; 13.50; 25.8, 253, 269; 32.184–5; 42.181. See Vian (1991a) 5–6; Hopkinson (1994b) 9–14.

[19] Hopkinson (1994b) 32.

As the young god is brought to birth from the thigh of father Zeus, so Nonnus springs forth from the thigh of his father Homer.[20] All epic poets might in some sense be considered to have 'sprung from Homer'; but for Nonnus this is true on several different levels. To begin with, the very opening words of the *Dionysiaca*—[1.1]: εἰπέ, θεά—allude to the openings of both Homeric epics.[21] In a further sense Nonnus is born from Homer, since it is in the *Iliad* that we have our first brief encounter with Dionysus, the future subject of Nonnus' epic.[22] And as already noted above, Nonnus will go on to give explicit confirmation of his position as Homer's son at 25.265.

Already in the proem appear signs of a familial tension which will resonate throughout the epic. Nonnus owes his life as an epic poet to Homer, yet right from the start he demonstrates a desire to be different, mixing imitation with innovation in an attempt to surpass his predecessor.[23] So it is with the Proteus episode. Nonnus' 'contest' with the metamorphic sea-god is itself a metamorphosed version of an earlier Homeric scene—the episode of Menelaus in Egypt, and his attempt to pin down the slippery Proteus at *Odyssey* 4.534ff. Nonnus' manipulation of this scene is both subtle and provocative. He has turned the spotlight onto the one Homeric scene which refers at length to Egypt, and thus has boldly redrawn the map of Greek epic. Alexandrian Proteus no longer resides on the margins; realizing (and releasing)

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[20] As Hopkinson (1994b) 13 has well observed, 'Nonnus pictures himself as springing from πατρὸς Ὁμήρου as Dionysus is born from the μηρός of Zeus, his πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ (1.7)'. A further blurring of the boundaries which separate the worlds of *actor* and *auctor*, is created by the word χαράξας in line 7. This verb is frequently used to describe acts of drawing and engraving, inviting us to imagine the hand of the poet at work, at the very moment that Zeus makes an incision into his own thigh; cf. 25.9–10: ἑβδομάτης δέ / ὑσμίνην ἰσάριθμον ἐμῆς στρουθοῖο χαράξω (I will inscribe that which has the number of my seventh sparrow) which connects χαράσσω explicitly to Nonnus' poetic activity. On χαράσσω see Riemschneider (1957). Cf. the use of ἐπιγράφω in, for example, [40.92]: ἀκρότατον χρόα μοῦνον ἐπέγραφε Δηριαδῆος (He just grazed the skin of Deriades).

[21] See Hopkinson (1994b) 33 n. 7: '[t]he opening words might be making a compendious point similar to Virgil's *arma virumque*, εἰπέ being inspired by the Odyssean ἔννεπε and θεά by the Iliadic θεά'; 1.7: πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ (father and revered mother) also derives, appropriately enough, from father Homer himself at *Iliad* 11.452 (reference noted by Vian (1976) 46). Hopkinson (1994b) 13 connects the ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ of Zeus [1.2] with the ἄσθμα which Nonnus asks his father Homer to breathe into him [25.261].

[22] Consider the emphasis placed on the Lycurgus scene from *Iliad* 6, with the notes of Hopkinson (1994a) *ad loc.*

[23] Cf. Hardie (1993) 100: 'The heroic grandeur of a Homer challenges imitation at the same time that it creates the fear of inferiority'.

the primacy inherent in his own name, he is reinscribed as a prominent symbol (or even beacon) of the new Nonnian world order.

The (ant)agonistic element of this scene is played out not between Nonnus and Proteus, but between Nonnus and Homer. After his own breathtaking display of verbal transformations, he offers a self-confident retort to Menelaus and Homer [1.37–8]: βυθίῃ δὲ παρ' Εἰδοθέῃ καὶ 'Ομήρῳ / φωκάων βαρὺ δέρμα φυλασσέσθω Μενελάῳ (Let Homer and deep-sea Eidothea keep the rank skin of the seals for Menelaus). The poet of Dionysus has no need for the trickery employed by Homer/Menelaus, since wine furnishes him with a new and more effective means of entrapment.[24] Nonnus shows emphatically that imitation is not enough. He will do things differently, and will prove himself to be superior in the very act of imitation. In this way Nonnus sets out his poetic 'stall', and establishes the terms of enagagement for the forthcoming poetic *agon.*

At this point, it would perhaps be appropriate to invoke briefly the name of Harold Bloom and his influential work of modern literary criticism: *The Anxiety of Influence.* Bloom's 'theory of poetry' provides a description of poetic influence, a description of the way one poet reacts to and engages with a predecessor.[25] 'Strong poets' assert their authority and independence by swerving away from their poetic forbears. This swerve (*clinamen*) consists in an act of wilful misreading (misprision), 'an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation'.[26] Importantly, the relationship between the poets is characterized in familial terms: the younger poet is characterized as the son attempting to escape from the shadow of his father. In Bloom's own words: 'Battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads; only this is my subject here . . .'.[27] In many ways the *agon* enacted

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[24] Cf. Harries (1994) 78–9: '. . . Dionysus does not need any kind of subterfuge or subtly deceiving role-play to make his impact. It is wine . . . which is now the more effective intoxicant (36–7), and it is this which the Dionysiac poet adopts as his symbol, rejecting the intoxication of beguiling δόλος'. Whilst it is true to say that the poet adopts wine as his symbol, it is misleading to suggest that this new symbol is free from δόλος. Wine is just as deceptive as the strains of Cadmus' pipes—as, for example, Nicaea and Aura learn to their cost. Thus Nicaea [16.252]: καὶ δόλον ἀγνώσσουσα γυναιμανέος Διονύσου . . . (Not noticing the trick of woman-mad Dionysus . . .).

[25] Bloom (1973). On the anxious and ambivalent relationship between poets see also Bate (1971); Ricks (1976); Hardie (1993).

[26] Bloom (1973) 30.

[27] Bloom (1973) 11. As Hardie (1993) 117 notes, 'Bloom's central model for the

throughout the *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus and Homer constitutes a paradigmatic enactment of Bloom's theory. The developing relationship between the two poets is represented (explicitly and by analogy) as that between son and father. In the Proteus episode we have witnessed the first signs of a Nonnian swerve away from his great epic progenitor, a first act of misprision which turns Proteus from an Homeric footnote into a central, Dionysiac, character; a misprision which will ultimately lead to the creation of a new, Dionysiac epic. According to Bloom's analysis of poetic influence, '[a] poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but is that anxiety'.[28] It is an observation which readers of the *Dionysiaca* may well wish take to heart. Nonnus' transformation of Homeric epic is not a *fait accompli*. The *Dionysiaca* is not the story of a successful epic poet, but the story of his *attempt* to become a successful poet. It is the story of Nonnus' on-going relationship with Homer, his own anxious endeavour to break free from the powerful influence of his father.

c) *Marsyas: a cautionary tale*

In the proem we have seen Nonnus elide the distance between himself and his subject, by establishing himself as a poet of Dionysus. We have also seen the beginnings of his anxious relationship with his father Homer, a relationship which will be paralleled in large part by Dionysus' own relationship with his father Zeus. The proem now ends with a brutal story, briefly told, presented in the following manner. At 1.39–40 the poet of Dionysus calls for the Bacchic tambourines and goat-skins, and explicitly rejects the pleasant sound of the double pipe.[29] He goes on to give a reason for this rejection: Nonnus does not want to upset Apollo;[30] [1.41–4]: δονάκων γὰρ

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relationship between poetic fathers and sons is the Oedipus complex'. It is interesting to note, however, that in the introduction to his second edition, Bloom (1997) xxii seeks to limit entirely the importance of filiation to his theory of poetry: 'I never meant by "the anxiety of influence" a Freudian Oedipal rivalry, despite a rhetorical flourish or two in this book' (a Bloomian misprision of his own first edition?).

[28] Bloom (1973) 94.

[29] See pp. 126–7.

[30] 1.40–1: μὴ καὶ ὀρίνω / Φοῖβον ἐμόν (so that I do not offend my Apollo). Nonnus here makes a deliberate, almost over-emphatic attempt to align himself with Apollo, nervously reassuring himself that the god is on his side. There is, however, a further level of playful sophistication. Nonnus has just mentioned Maronian wine [1.36], and Maron is soon to become a character in his own right, as wine steward and charioteer of Dionysus. This character has impeccable Odyssean credentials. He provided the wine which Odysseus used to make the Cyclops drunk. Most interestingly,

ἀναίνεται ἔμπνοον ἠχὼ / ἐξότε Μαρσύαο θεημάχον αὐλὸν ἐλέγξας / δέρμα παρῃώρησε φυτῷ κολπούμενον αὔραις, / γυμνώσας ὅλα γυῖα λιπορρίνοιο νομῆος (for [Apollo] rejects the sound of breathing reeds, ever since he put to shame Marsyas and his god-defiant pipes, and bared every limb of the skin-stript shepherd, and hung his skin on a tree to belly in the breezes).

These lines form an extraordinary and perplexing climax to the proem. If we had expected Nonnus to end on an up-beat note confidence, confident and eager in his anticipation of forthcoming victory for both himself and his hero, we are proved wrong. Marsyas' flapping hide is the last thing we see before the poet cuts forward to the beginning of his narrative [1.44–5]. I believe that the figure of Marsyas has been deliberately, even provocatively, positioned at this prominent point in the epic.[31] The story of Proteus first made us aware of Nonnus' own attempt to challenge, rival and surpass Homer; it placed in the foreground, and opened up for debate, the whole idea of poetic challenge. The story of Marsyas can be seen to represent a symbolic climax to this same debate: the skin-stripped figure who hangs between proem and main narrative offers a disquieting warning to all those who would challenge figures of authority. It reminds us, in no uncertain terms, of the difficulties (and dangers) that face both Dionysus and Nonnus in their own attempts to challenge paternal authority, and the existing structures of power which govern the world.[32] Marsyas represents the first brief example of the doomed challenger: the figure who tries in vain to usurp the role of another.[33] In the following books we will see a catalogue of such figures: none more spectacular, both in terms of the threat-

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he is named by Homer as the priest of Apollo [*Od.* 9.196–8]: ἀτὰρ αἴγεον ἀσκὸν ἔχον μέλανος οἴνοιο, / ἡδέος, ὅν μοι δῶκε Μάρων Εὐάνθεος υἱός, / ἱρεὺς Ἀπόλλωνος (With me I had a goatskin of the dark, sweet wine, which Maron, son of Euanthes, had given me, the priest of Apollo). Nonnus has wittily metamorphosed the august priest of Apollo into the drunken priest of Dionysus.

[31] Strangely, this story has attracted little critical attention. Harries (1994) 63 draws attention to the proem's 'problematic last lines', though for different reasons.

[32] Will Nonnus fare any better with divine Homer than Marsyas did against Apollo? The skin-torn fate of Marsyas—[1.43]: δέρμα παρῃώρησε φυτῷ κολπούμενον αὔραις (He hung his skin on a tree to belly in the breezes)—creates an uncomfortable resonance when we recall Nonnus' own attempts to swap his 'skin' (exchanging the rank skin of a seal—[1.38]: φωκάων βαρὺ δέρμα—for that of a fawn [1.34–6]).

[33] On the symbolic function of Marsyas and the theme of artistic failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* see Leach (1974).

ening nature of his challenge and the measure of his failure, than the monster Typhon. And it is to Typhon and the beginning of the narrative of Dionysus that we now turn.

The Poet of Dionysus I: Epic Beginnings [1–12]

1. *Poetic doublets*

In the first book of Nonnus' epic we are introduced to two characters who operate, to some extent, as doublets for the figure of the poet: Typhon and Cadmus. They make a significant contribution to a debate about the ways and means of writing epic poetry, and form part of the 'evolutionary' process of the *Dionysiaca*, the learning experience which will enable the poet to develop and articulate his own distinctive voice. Typhon is symbolic of the novice, and incompetent, epic poet who fails dramatically in his bid to overturn the established world order; he represents precisely the type of poet whom Nonnus ought *not* to emulate. Cadmus, by contrast, represents a more positive poetic role-model. His use of pastoral deception to quell Typhon's epic insurrection will provides an important, though only partial, model for Nonnus' own deceptive Dionysiac song.

a) *Typhon*

The first two books of the *Dionysiaca* describe Typhon's violent attempt to overthrow the order of the world, and his defeat by the combined forces of Cadmus and Zeus. This direct assault on a dominant power structure suggests immediate parallels with Nonnus own poetic undertaking, his challenge to the existing order of Homeric epic. It will be instructive to consider Typhon as a poetic figure, to compare and contrast his attempts to seize power with Nonnus' own efforts to write epic.[34]

The key to Typhon's success lies in his ability to appropriate and control the thunderbolts of Zeus. For the budding epic poet success

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[34] Cf. Braden (1974) 879: '[Typhon] is almost a *persona* for the poet himself'; (1974) 874: 'Typhon's actions move away from Typhon himself into the abstracted dismemberment of a literary ethos; the process of the poem moves quite close to being its own subject matter'.

lies in his ability to control not literal but literary thunderbolts: the powerful hexameters of Homer. For contemporary readers, the connection between thunder and epic poetry was already well-established;[35] it is further emphasized by Nonnus' own description of the thunderbolts as musical instruments [1.431–2]: πηκτίδα σὴν ἔχε μοῦνος, ἐπεὶ λάχεν ἄλλο Τυφωεύς / ὄργανον αὐτοβόητον Ὀλύμπιον (Keep your pipes alone, since Typhoeus possesses another kind of organ, the Olympian which plays by itself).[36] But it is one thing to possess the thunderbolts of epic, another to use them successfully. The monster Typhon struggles to lift up the weapons despite his two hundred hands [1.297]: . . . χερσὶ διηκοσίῃσι πέλωρ ἐμόγησε Τυφωεύς; in pointed contrast to Zeus, who can wield them one-handed [1.298]: παλάμῃ δὲ μιῇ κούφιζε Κρονίων. The bolts themselves are aware that they are in the hands of a novice—[1.305]: παλάμας νοέοντες ἀπειρήτοιο φορῆος—and miss the familiar touch of their heavenly master [1.309].

Typhon's efforts to master the thunderbolts are compared to the endeavours of a novice driver to control a bit-shy horse [1.310–14]: ὡς δ' ὅτε τις πλήξιππος ἀποπτυστῆρα χαλινοῦ / ξεῖνος ἀνὴρ ἀδίδακτος ἀπειθέα πῶλον ἱμάσσων / πυκνὰ μάτην μογέεσκεν, ὁ δὲ θρασὺς ἔμφρονι θυμῷ / χεῖρα νόθην γίνωσκεν ἀήθεος ἡνιοχῆος, / οἰστρηθεὶς δ' ἀνέπαλτο (As a man beats a horse that loathes the bit,—some stranger, a novice untaught, flogging a restive nag, as he tries again and again in vain, and the defiant beast knows by instinct the changeling hand of an unfamiliar driver, leaping madly . . .). The comparison is apposite for our reading of Typhon, the would-be poet. The image of the chariot of poetry can be located as far back as Pindar, one of Nonnus' explicit models;[37] it is further exploited by Callimachus in his *Aetia* prologue where Apollo enjoins [fr. 1.25–7]: τὰ μὴ πατέουσιν ἅμαξαι / τὰ στείβειν, ἑτέρων δ' ἴχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά / δίφρον ἐλ]ᾶν (Tread a path which carriages do not trample; do not drive your chariot upon the common tracks of others); the image occurs also in Triphiodorus, Nonnus' most immediate, extant, epic predecessor.[38] Here then, in

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[35] Thunder was seen as the characteristic feature of epic poetry by Callimachus: in the preface to the *Aetia* (a vehicle for his polemical views on the practice of poetry) he states [fr. 1.20]: βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός (It is not for me to thunder, but for Zeus [i.e. Homer]).

[36] See Hansen (1995) 18–20; 18: 'Intriguingly, Nonnos connects both the thunderbolts and the sinews closely with musical instruments'.

[37] E.g. Pind. *O.* 1.109–10; *P.* 10.65: ἅρμα Πιερίδων (chariot of the Muses); *I.* 8.61: Μοισαῖον ἅρμα (chariot of inspiration); *Pae.* 7B.13.

[38] Triph. 666–7: Μουσάων ὅδε μόχθος· ἐγὼ δ' ἅ περ ἵππον ἐλάσσω / τέρματος

Nonnus' simile, we are given a graphic illustration of the novice's failure to steer the chariot of poetry.[39]

Typhon's threat to the order of the world is itself symbolic of the Typhonic poet's own threat to the narrative of the *Dionysiaca*.[40] Books 1–2 have witnessed the creation of a monstrous *Typhoniaca*, a grotesque caricature of an epic poem.[41] This is just the sort of poem that Callimachus would have eschewed—and with good reason: Typhon's every attempt to assert his authority merely underlines his incompetence. Whereas Zeus's bull is raised up neatly to the stars [1.355–62], Typhon's mimic catasterism threatens catastrophe [1.213–16]: πολλάκι δ' ἀγραύλοιο πεπαυμένον ἱστοβοῆος / ταῦρον ἀπειλητῆρι μεμυκότα πήχεϊ σείων / ἰσοφυὲς μίμημα κατηκόντιζε Σελήνης, / καὶ δρόμον ἐστήριξεν (Many a time he took a bull at rest from his rustic plowtree and shook him with a threatening hand, bellow as he would, then shot him against the Moon like another moon, and stayed her course). Typhon may hold the thunderbolts of Zeus for the moment, yet we feel that there remains a vast, even insurmountable, distance between model and imitator.[42]

Even when he is tricked into handing over the thunderbolts, Typhon will not give up his course of destruction. Although he is doomed to failure, the multiform monster seems to have a limitless capacity for self-deception [2.344–7]: ἀντιτύπους δέ / κρέσσονας ὀψιγόνους πολυφεγγέι μείζονι πυρσῷ / ἀστεροπὰς ἑτέρας χαλκεύσομαι. εὐρύτερον δέ / ὄγδοον οὐρανὸν ἄλλον ὑπέρτερον ὑψόθι τεύξω . . . (I will forge a newer and a better brand of lightning, with more fire and flashes, I will build another heaven up aloft, the eighth, broader and

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ἀμφιέλισσαν ἐπιψαύουσαν ἀοιδήν (This is the Muses' task; and I shall drive, as it were a horse, a song which, wheeling about, grazes the turning post).

[39] Is Typhon imagined as a rider or charioteer? Compare 38.323–8, where Phaethon, the son of the sun, struggles vainly to control his father's horses. That ἡνιοχεύς is a charioteer, and so too is the ἡνιοχεύς at 1.313.

[40] Cf. Harries (1994) 66: 'Typhon has threatened to alter the course of the whole poem by stealing Zeus's thunderbolts'.

[41] Cf. Newbold (1985) 4: 'Typhoeus does not understand the constructive use of power'. Indeed, Typhon's brazen retort—[1.440]: ἐγὼ βρονταῖον ἀράσσω (I will crash my thundery tune)—seems to fly directly in the face of Callimachus' poetic sensibilities; cf. p. 122 n. 35.

[42] The monster is destined always to be a counterfeit, bastard version of the original [1.295]: Ζεὺς νόθος. Only Zeus can successfully exploit bastard forms, as his bull-backed deception of Europa has shown. Though even this imitation is not unproblematic, since Zeus's imitation can be seen in some sense to have caused the Typhonomachy in the first place; see p. 35.

higher than the rest, and furnish it with brighter stars . . .). Typhon seems here to be fantasizing about a new type of epic song, an epic which will be bigger and better than that of Olympian Homer. In the end though, his fantasy comes to nought: having first been deceived by the music of Cadmus, Typhon is brought low by the real king of heaven and his armoury of thunderbolts [2.559–62]. Only now does order return to the world [2.650–1].

Modern critics have, it seems, been all too ready to identify Nonnus with his doomed creation Typhon.[43] It is an identification which we should be wary of making. Typhon does not function as a simple doublet for Nonnus. The defeat of the monster at the end of Book 2 emphasizes that Nonnus is *not* a Typhonic poet.[44] Typhon represents one in a line of self-consciously poetic figures who engage in a debate about the poet's capacity to write epic. Nonnus uses the story of Typhon to foreground the difficulties and dangers of imitation, and ultimately to increase our awareness about the enormity of his mimetic endeavour.[45] The poet wants us to know that he has a difficult task ahead, that role-playing, the act of taking on the form and function of another, is a dangerous business. From the start he encourages the reader to share in the anxious process of writing epic.

Encouragingly, Nonnus' narrative will, on no other occasion, be threatened by such an impetus of chaos.[46] The Typhonomachy represents not just a story about the dangers of usurpation, but also a learning experience. It is significant that two other figures who attempt

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[43] Hainsworth (1991) 99 describes the whole poem as 'monstrous'. Compare the response of the following Ovidian critics to notions of failure and decline present in the poetic text: Hinds (1998) 90: 'Whereas in the past Ovid's own professions of decline were taken as confirming an actual decline in his work, on the new post-modern reading the elaborate Ovidian manipulations of "decline" are increasingly being taken as a kind of proof that there is *no* decline in the exile poetry: the self-consciousness of the trope empties itself of its meaning'; Leach (1974) 133: 'As the maker of the poem, Ovid does not necessarily share the limitations of his characters and his artistic identity is never so frail. He is the ultimate controller of their destinies, illuminating their errors and foreseeing their inevitable destruction'. This does not mean, of course, that Ovid's poetry is *not* capable of decline, nor that Nonnus is not capable of Typhonic failure.

[44] A point I owe to Dr P. Hardie.

[45] Cf. Hinds (1998) 94: 'One of the ways in which an epicist marks his genre as the highest and most ambitious is to stress his incomplete capacity to control it'.

[46] Cf. Braden (1974) 878: 'the anarchic energy that must first of all be overcome is reshaped into the figure of a new Olympian; the progression from Typhon to Dionysos is the progression from simple savagery to civilization with an annual Dionysia. Release, henceforth, will confirm order'.

to imitate and usurp the role of another, and again throw the cosmos out of joint, offer no direct threat to the order of the poem: both Aphrodite and Phaethon exist within the narrative as exemplary fictions; their transgressive capacities, and potentially destructive effect, safely contained.[47]

b) *Cadmus*

In order to secure the return of his thunderbolts and defeat Typhon, Zeus (together with Pan)[48] disguises Cadmus as a shepherd and places him in a contrived pastoral setting, which includes a straw hut, sheep and goats [1.368–73]. Then, [1.374–5]: καὶ δολίην σύριγγα φέρων εἰδήμονι Κάδμῳ / δῶκε Τυφαονίοιο κυβερνήτειραν ὀλέθρου (he gave clever Cadmus the deceiving pan-pipes, part of the plot to pilot Typhaon to his death). By the end of Book 1 Cadmus has harnessed the deceptive power of pastoral music and secured the first crucial victory over Typhon [1.533–4]: ὡς ὅ γε Κάδμῳ / θελγομένην μελέεσσιν ὅλην φρένα δῶκε Τυφωεύς (so Typhoeus yielded his whole soul to Cadmus for the melody to charm).

As a singer of songs, the figure of Cadmus invites immediate comparison with that of Nonnus.[49] However, although they are complementary figures, they do not function simply as doublets. If 'Typhon' offers a warning about the dangers of writing epic, then 'Cadmus' presents one way in which those dangers might be circumvented. He is a model of poetic success, not poetic failure. As has been well described by Byron Harries, the victory of Cadmus over Typhon can be seen in symbolic terms as the victory of pastoral over the genre of traditional epic.[50]

Harries describes how the intoxicating power of pastoral (as represented by Cadmus) which is so successful in defeating Typhon, is

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[47] See pp. 168–70. (Aphrodite); pp. 185–9. (Phaethon).

[48] Both Nonnus and Cadmus appear to share a familiarity with the figure of Pan. Pan provides Cadmus with the necessary pastoral stage-props [1.368–75]; Nonnus himself comes from Panopolis—the very city of Pan—as we learn from *AP* 9.198.

[49] Both must overcome chaos and win over their audience through the seductive power of song. Cf. Harries (1994) 68: 'the effect of the music is to beguile the reader as well'; Hopkinson (1994b): 'Cadmus' pipes are called πηκτίδος ἡδὺ βέλεμνον and ἔμπνοος . . . δόναξ (2.19, 21), phrases which resemble Nonnus' description of his own poetry in Book 25'. Whereas Cadmus dresses in shepherd's clothes [1.372], Nonnus wears a fawn-skin over his shoulders [1.34–6].

[50] Harries (1994) 63–85, in his article 'The Pastoral Mode in the *Dionysiaca*', has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of such generic manipulation in Nonnus' epic.

itself rejected by Nonnus in favour of the more effective intoxicant of Dionysiac song.[51] He goes on to suggest that this rejection of pastoral music is already anticipated in the proem [1.1–44].[52] His argument hinges on the interpretation of two lines [1.39–40]: εὔϊά μοι δότε ῥόπτρα καὶ αἰγίδας, ἡδυμελῆ δέ / ἄλλῳ δίθροον αὐλὸν ὀπάσσατε . . . (Give me the jocund tambours and the goatskins! but leave for another the double-sounding pipe with its melodious sweetness). Accordingly, Nonnus accepts Bacchic instruments at this point in recognition of the fact that he is now a Bacchic poet; at the same time he rejects pastoral instruments, in recognition of the fact that the victory of Dionysus will render them obsolete.[53] The first part of this description is indisputably correct, since Nonnus does make an explicit call for Dionysiac instruments [1.39]: εὔϊα . . . ῥόπτρα. However, there is no compelling reason why we should choose to recognize the αὐλός as a pastoral instrument.[54] More importantly, Harries' interpretation ignores the second of Nonnus' proemial requests: along with Dionysiac tambourines, the poet also calls for goat-skins [1.39]: αἰγίδας. The goat is indeed an animal with strong Dionysiac connections,[55] but as we know from Theocritus *inter alios*, it is also an essential part of the pastoral world.[56] How, then, does the rejection of pastoral pipes square with the acceptance of pastoral goat-skins? Furthermore, how can the adjective ἡδυμελῆ [1.39] suggest non-Bacchic enchantment, when wine, that ultimate Bacchic enchantment, is itself described so insistently as ἡδύς?[57]

The contrast at 1.39–41 does not appear to function quite as Harries has proposed. Nonnus' reasons for exploiting such a contrast lie, I would suggest, in his desire to provide a suitable peg from which to hang the figure of Marsyas: an exemplum not of defeated pastoral but of the dangers of imitation and usurpation.[58] However,

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[51] Harries (1994) 78–9.
[52] Harries (1994) 78.
[53] Harries (1994) 78.
[54] Vian (1976) 47 n. 3 notes how the αὐλός has its place in the worship of Cybele and Dionysus.
[55] See, for example, Otto (1965) 167–9.
[56] See the capricious climax at Theoc. *Id.* 1.151–2.
[57] E.g. 12.203; 15.23; 20.275; 42.359.
[58] Marsyas' appearance as a shepherd—νομῆος [1.44] (a description apparently unique to Nonnus, as Harries (1994) 85 n. 93 observes)—links him to shepherd Cadmus—[1.412]: νομῆος—who, like Marsyas, had the audacity to challenge Apollo (or so he would have us believe) [1.489–92].

his suggestion that Dionysiac song *supersedes* pastoral remains an excellent one, which needs only a little modification. The movement from one form of song to the next is best viewed, I would argue, not as a process of rejection but of succession. Pastoral does not provide a straight alternative to Dionysiac song, but is a staging post along the way. The pastoral genre relates to Dionysiac song in the same way that Cadmus relates to Dionysus: they are both, in some sense, ancestral prototypes.

As we have seen, the mimic shepherd wins an important victory over the monstrous Typhon [1.533–4]; yet it is only a partial victory: it will be for Zeus not Cadmus to exult over the monster's body.[59] Cadmus is fallible and above all mortal; he has limitations that his divine grandson does not share.[60] Likewise pastoral can only ever be a limited poetic tool. The poetic *alter ego* suggested by Cadmus is a first step in the right direction, but it will take a Dionysiac poetic (which comes to light only in Book 12) properly to rival the forces of chaos. Pastoral can deceive and beguile—Typhon is himself defeated by the pastoral force of δόλος[61]—but with only qualified success. Dionysiac song, when it finally comes to fruition, will also deceive and beguile, but this time its success will know no bounds.

2. *Dionysiac Poets*

a) *Zagreus*

Zagreus, like Cadmus, is another one of Dionysus' ancestors, but the nature of his ancestry is somewhat different. This character is not simply an older relation of Dionysus; he is an actual, earlier, version of him, the first of three incarnations of the same figure: Zagreus, Dionysus, Iacchus.[62] In Book 6, Zeus seduces the virgin Persephone, in the guise of a serpent; a seduction which results in a horned baby called Zagreus. Whilst still a baby, Zagreus seeks to take over the role of Zeus [6.165–8]: ὃς Διὸς ἕδρης / μοῦνος ἐπουρανίης ἐπεβήσατο·

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[59] Cadmus' success is destined to be overshadowed by familial sorrow and anguine transformation.

[60] These correspondences may be carried on beyond the pastoral world of Books 1–2: the imperfections of Cadmus' narrative compare with the ultimate perfection of Dionysus' own narrative. It might be considered here that Odyssean allusion in Book 3 is appropriate to the close of the cycle of Cadmus, whilst the Argonautic allusion at the same point is appropriate to the early, outward phase of Dionysus' Cycle.

[61] Harries (1994) 78: 'δόλος is a force to be reckoned with in the pastoral world'.

[62] See 48.968.

χειρὶ δὲ βαιῇ / ἀστεροπὴν ἐλέλιζε· νεηγενέος δὲ φορῆος / νηπιάχοις παλάμῃσιν ἐλαφρίζοντο κεραυνοί (who by himself climbed upon the heavenly throne of Zeus and brandished lightning in his little hand, and newly born, lifted and carried thunderbolts in his tender fingers). Zagreus achieves what Typhon found impossible: he takes over control of the universe. On initial inspection, this looks like a very positive model for any epic poet to follow. However, we learn almost at once that Zagreus' achievement is not destined to last [6.169]; [6.172–3]: . . . Ταρταρίῃ Τιτῆνες ἐδηλήσαντο μαχαίρῃ / ἀντιτύπῳ νόθον εἶδος ὀπιπεύοντα κατόπτρῳ (And while he contemplated his changeling countenance reflected in a mirror, the Titans destroyed him with an infernal knife). Zagreus' attempt at assuming the authoritative role of Zeus, proves just as ineffective as that of Typhon. What sort of a lesson, then, does this figure now provide for the budding epic poet?

One of the most striking features of Zagreus is his ability to metamorphose himself into all manner of forms [6.176–205]; [6.176]: ἀλλοφυὴς μορφοῦτο πολυσπερὲς εἶδος ἀμείβων (He appeared in another shape and changed into many forms).[63] His shape-shifting talent invites close analogy with the poet Nonnus, whose proemial transformations have been discussed above.[64] In respect of his ability to change shape, Zagreus is a clear improvement on Typhon, who encompassed many limbs and heads within one form, but lacked the capacity to engage in subtle transformations. Yet, however much Zagreus resembles the self-assured proemial poet, fully confident in his powers of metamorphosis, he also falls short of that same figure: even with the sanction of Zeus,[65] Zagreus is too young, too inexperienced to establish himself on the throne of Olympus. Here is a clear lesson for all would-be poets: in undertaking the challenge of epic, poetic talent is not enough; without experience, not even the sanction of Homer himself will be enough to secure one's position on the throne of epic.

This general metapoetic allusion may well have a more specific target. Although it can remain nothing more than an unverifiable hypothesis, it is tempting to speculate that 'Zagreus' might allude to

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[63] See 6.177–205 for a full account of Zagreus' transformations into Zeus, Cronus, baby, young man, lion, horse, serpent, tiger, and finally bull.

[64] See pp. 117–19. Both Nonnus and Zagreus embrace the principle of ποικιλία: Nonnus wears a νεβρίδα ποικιλόνωτον [1.35], so Zagreus transforms himself into a ποικιλόμορφον . . . βρέφος [6.179].

[65] See 10.293–7.

early attempts by Nonnus at writing epic poetry, attempts prior to the *Dionysiaca*. This episode might then refer to poetic juvenalia (lacking not in talent but in experience) which have been cut down to size by Titan critics. Such an hypothesis encourages further speculation. To what Nonnian juvenalia might 'Zagreus' refer? One imagines, perhaps, an earlier, unsuccessful version of the *Dionysiaca*; or perhaps even the paraphrase of St. John's Gospel, a work generally regarded as being anterior to the *Dionysiaca*.[66] As Dionysus is born out of the dying Zagreus, it is possible to imagine the *Dionysiaca* itself rising up out of the 'ashes' of the epic paraphrase: [6.175]: τέρμα βίου Διόνυσος ἔχων παλινάγρετον ἀρχήν . . . (The end of his life was the beginning of a new life as Dionysus).

b) *Dionysus*

Shortly after the description of Zagreus, the first incarnation of Dionysus, we are introduced to the second. After seven books of 'prehistory', the subject (and hero) of Nonnus' epic is at last conceived and brought to birth. Dionysus does not represent a transient, short-term, doublet for the poet. The life and progress of the Nonnus will be intimately bound up in the life and progress of his hero. Nor will the poet outgrow, or move beyond, the figure of Dionysus. Dionysus may be seen as the poet's own *alter ego*—as the epic progresses, the two figures will both move and grow together.

From the moment of his conception, Dionysus is marked out for great things: Zeus announces to Semele that she will give birth to an immortal son [7.366] who will be a joy for men and gods alike, and an antidote for mortal misery [7.367–8]—descriptions not entirely unsuited to the *Dionysiaca* itself. From the moment of his birth, Dionysus has an intuition of the high path that is marked out for him. He exhibits an early fascination with the heavenly realm of his father [9.32–6]: καὶ πάις ἀντικέλευθον ἐς οὐρανὸν ὄμμα τιταίνων / ὕπτιος ἦεν ἄυπνος . . . / . . . / καὶ πόλον ἐσκοπίαζεν ἀήθεα, θαμβαλέος δέ / πατρῴην ἐγέλασσεν ἴτυν δεδοκημένος ἄστρων (The boy lay on his back unsleeping, and fixt his eye on the heaven above . . . he stared at the unfamiliar sky, and laughed in wonder to see his father's vault of stars).[67] It is not difficult to imagine Nonnus filled with a similar

[66] See Vian (1976) xviii for a necessarily cautious assessment of the chronology.

[67] His sense of destiny is endorsed by Semele at 10.134–5: . . . ἐμὸς τόκος αἰθέρα ναίειν / ἵξεται εἰς Διὸς οἶκον ὑπέρτερον (My son will come to the house of Zeus to dwell in the sky).

sense of destiny as an epic poet, with his own gaze fixed on Homer's heavenly abode.

But these are early days for both poet and hero: Nonnus and Dionysus are still in their infancy. At this moment they are only beginning to explore their relationships with their fathers. For Dionysus the shadow of his father looms large over his childhood.[68] Initially at least, the son not wish to escape from his father's influence—indeed, he makes *deliberate* efforts to appear like Zeus [9.189–90]: στικτοῖς πορδαλίεσσιν ἑὴν ἔζευξεν ἀπήνην, / οἷά τε πατρῴων δαπέδων ἴνδαλμα γεραίρων (He yoked speckled panthers to his cart as if to make it like the place where his father dwelt).[69] Thus inspired with the spirit of his father, the son is now able to perform feats of derring-do [9.194–5]: καὶ Διὸς ὑψιμέδοντος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάρσος ἀέξων / δεξιτερὴν ἐτίταινεν ἐπὶ στόμα λυσσάδος ἄρκτου (The boldness of Zeus high and mighty grew in his heart, until he stretched his right hand to the snout of a wild she-bear . . .).[70]

Nonnus' own poetic 'childhood' maps neatly onto the model enacted by Dionysus. As an epic poet, the shadow of Homer looms large over him.[71] And nor does Nonnus attempt to shy away from the influence of his father. Explicit allusion, the active remodelling of Homeric scenes,[72] the conscious forty-eight book structure all point to an active, determined attempt on the part of Nonnus to model himself on Homer. At this stage, however, the mimetic efforts of Nonnus and Dionysus still suggest a significant distance between fathers and sons. The sons are far from being full-grown rivals of their fathers. Nonnus' epic may look Homeric, but it does not yet represent a challenge to Homer. That challenge still lies ahead of him, in his full-scale engagement with the *Iliad* in Books 25–40. For

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[68] Just like father Zeus, he grows up under the care of the Corybants [9.168]: πατρῴαις κομιδῇσιν ἀεξήθη Κορυβάντων.

[69] Compare the young Phaethon and his attempt to imitate his father at 38.167–83.

[70] When Dionysus and Ampelus wrestle together, Dionysus allows himself to be conquered, just like his father Zeus who was once willingly defeated by Heracles [10.373–5]: ὀψὲ δὲ νικηθέντος, ἀνικήτου περ ἐόντος, / Ζηνὸς ἀεθλητῆρος ἔχων μίμημα τοκῆος / νικήθη Διόνυσος ἑκούσιος . . . (Thus Dionysus was conquered with his own consent, like his father as an athlete, who was conquered at last though invincible . . .); cf. 48.136–7 where Dionysus again feigns mortal weakness in his contest with Pallene.

[71] The epic texture of his poem, its metre, vocabulary and narrative details betrays its Homeric origins. See, for example, Hopkinson (1994b) 14–16.

[72] See, for example, the remodelling of 'Odysseus in Phaeacia' in Book 3.

the moment, however, just as the boy Dionysus is only 'play-acting'—[10.193; 325]: ἀθύρων—, so Nonnus is himself only 'playing' with Homer, experimenting with the pitch and range of his poetic voice.[73]

During Dionysus' adolescence at the court of Rhea, he falls in love with the satyr named Ampelus. Such are his feelings for this youth that he gives serious consideration to rejecting the divine destiny[74] which lies ahead of him [10.298–9]: σεῖο δ' ἐγὼ πρηστῆρος ἀναίνομαι αἰθέριον πῦρ, / οὐ νέφος, οὐ βροντῆς ἐθέλω κτύπον (I do not ask the heavenly fire of your lightning, nor the cloud, nor the thunderclap).[75] His renunciation of his future destiny in preference for present erotic satisfaction becomes all the more emphatic just a few lines later [10.305–8]: καλὸν ἐμοὶ Σεμέλης στεροπὴν ἐλάχειαν ἀείρειν· / μητροφόνοι σπινθῆρες ἀτερπέες εἰσὶ κεραυνοῦ. / ναίω Μαιονίην· τί γὰρ αἰθέρι καὶ Διονύσῳ; / κάλλος ἐμοῦ Σατύροιο φιλαίτερόν ἐστιν 'Ολύμπου (A fine thing it would be for me to wield Semele's diminutive lightning! The sparks of thunderbolt that killed my mother are no pleasure to me. Maionia is my dwelling place; what is the sky to Dionysus? My satyr's beauty is fairer to me than Olympus).

This scene of eroticism and rejection has important consequences for our understanding of Nonnus' own poetic destiny. In a manner analogous to Dionysus, Nonnus contemplates the abandonment of his own poetic destiny. He issues a spirited rejection of the thunderbolts of epic,[76] in favour of erotic subject-matter. And for a moment it really looks as if erotic forces have succeeded in subverting the course of the epic, that the narrative of love has conquered over the narrative of war. This subversion is highlighted through Nonnus' recasting of Homeric material in a new erotic context: the funeral games

[73] This is not to suggest that Nonnus' engagement with Homer is in any way immature or lacking in sophistication at this point.

[74] At 9.149–50 Hermes hands over Dionysus to Rhea with the following words: δέξο, θεά, νέον υἷα τεοῦ Διός, ὃς μόθον 'Ινδῶν / ἀθλεύσας μετὰ γαῖαν ἐλεύσεται εἰς πόλον ἄστρων (Receive, goddess, a new son of your Zeus! He is to fight with the Indians, and when he has done with earth he will come into the starry sky).

[75] When Dionysus hears about the death of Ampelus he curses the fact that he is immortal and therefore unable to share the same fate as his lover [11.325–6]: ὤμοι, ὅτ' οὔ με φύτευσε πατὴρ βροτόν, ὄφρα κεν εἴην / σύννομος ἠιθέῳ καὶ ἐν Ἄιδι . . . (Alas that my father begat me not a mortal, that I might be playfellow with my boy even in Hades).

[76] 10.299: οὐ βροντῆς ἐθέλω κτύπον (I do not want the thunderclap) calls to mind Callimachus' rejection of epic in the *Aetia* prologue [fr. 1.20; quoted on p. 122 n. 35]; cf. 1.440.

for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23 are ironically re-enacted as sporting contests between Dionysus and Ampelus in Book 10, contests which allow them to delight in close physical contact and in the play of seduction.[77]

It is not just the funeral games of Patroclus that are reworked into Nonnus' erotic programme [10.333–5]: τοῖσι μὲν οὐ τρίπος ἦεν ἀέθλιον, οὐδ' ἐπὶ νίκῃ / ἀνθεμόεις παρέκειτο λέβης, οὐ φορβάδες ἵπποι, / ἀλλὰ λιγυφθόγγων διδυμόθροος αὐλὸς Ἐρώτων (No tripod was their prize, no flower-graven cauldron lay ready for the victory, no horses from the grass, but a double pipe of love with clearsounding notes). Here we see a moment from the final, tragic, flight of Hector at *Iliad* 22.159–61.[78] The change in register between the two passages—from πάθος to πόθος (as it were)—speaks for itself. Where the two Homeric heroes compete for the life of Hector, tamer of horses—[*Il.* 22.161]: ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο—the two Dionysiac lovers compete for the flute of the Loves.[79] Homeric epic is hereby recast in an exuberant, erotic, guise. And for the moment, at least, Nonnus appears to have abandoned any intentions of becoming a 'serious' epic poet.

3. *The Dionysiac Poetic*

The erotic fantasies of the poet and his subject are not destined to last for long: their playful, seductive, world is shattered by the death of Ampelus.[80] In order to assuage Dionysus' grief for the death of

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[77] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 1.357; Chrétien (1985) 74–80. It is a clear point of tragic foreshadowing that Ampelus should take part in funeral games immediately before his own death in Book 11.

[78] Quoted on p. 38; reference not noted by Chrétien (1985).

[79] At 2.395–63 Nonnus moved the register in the opposite direction, imbuing the same Homeric allusion with a cosmic significance.

[80] In the manner of his death, Ampelus fits into the mould of Typhon and Phaethon as another example of a figure who oversteps the mark, transgressing the order of the cosmos. As in the other two examples, the prominence of horse/chariot imagery is notable. Thus Ate to Ampelus [11.139–42]: σὺ δέ, κοῦρε, φέρων πόθον εἰσέτι δίφρου / εἰς δρόμον ἀστήρικτον ἀναίνεο πῶλον ἐλαύνειν, / ὅττι πολυστροφάλιγγι ποδῶν δεδονημένος ὁλκῷ / ἵππος ἀελλήεις ἀποσείεται ἡνιοχῆα (Now my boy, look here: but you are still kept waiting for the chariot, so just refuse to drive a nervous colt on the road—a horse goes rattling along like a tempest on a whirlwind of legs, and shakes out the driver). And again some twenty lines later [11.183–4]: καὶ βοέαις πλευρῇσι νόθην μάστιγα τιταίνων, / <u>εὐχαίτην ἅτε πῶλον</u>, ἑὸν μάστιζε φονῆα (He swung his makebelieve whip on the bull's flanks and flogged his mount as if he were a longmaned colt). Compare Aura, the charioteer of Artemis, who has ideas above her station [48.361]: ἱλήκοι τεὸν εἶδος· ἐγὼ σέο μᾶλλον ἀρείων (I ask pardon of your beauty, but I am much better than you).

his beloved friend, Ampelus is transformed into a vine. As Atropus announces [12.145–6]: Ἄμπελος οὐ τέθνηκε, καὶ εἰ θάνεν· ἱμερόεν γάρ / εἰς ποτόν, εἰς γλυκὺ νέκταρ ἐγὼ σέο κοῦρον ἀμείψω (Ampelus is not dead, even if he died; for I will change your boy to a lovely drink, a delicious nectar). But wine is not the only thing to spring up at this point. After eleven books of poetic experimentation, here at last we have reached the climax of that experiment. This is the moment when Nonnus' epic finally discovers its own distinctive voice, the unique mode of expression which will set it apart from its literary ancestors: the Dionysiac poetic. A detailed investigation of the emergence of the grape/vine and the discovery of wine in Book 12 promises to yield important comparative material for our understanding of the composition and effect of Nonnus' new poetic fruit.

No sooner has Dionysus tasted the new drink, than he launches into an excited eulogy to the transformed Ampelus [12.237–9]: οὐ δύναται φυτὸν ἄλλο τεαῖς σταφυλῇσιν ἐρίζειν. / οὐ ῥόδον, οὐ νάρκισσος εὔχροος, οὐκ ἀνεμώνη, / οὐ κρίνον, οὐχ ὑάκινθος ἰσάζεται ἔρνεϊ Βάκχου (But no other plant can rival your grapes—not the rose, not the tinted daffodil, not the anenome, not the lily, not the iris is equal to the plant of Bacchus). The aptly named Rose suggested that this list of flowers is imitated from a poem by Rufinus in the *Greek Anthology*.[81] Although four of the five flowers named by Nonnus are the same as in Rufinus, Vian did not consider the correspondence sufficiently convincing to include in his commentary on Book 12.[82] His caution seems largely justified: the *Greek Anthology* abounds with such lists of flowers,[83] and they are hardly alien to the world of the *Dionysiaca*.[84] However, regardless of whether or not Nonnus does allude to the Greek anthologist at this point, Rufinus is still useful for our understanding of the Dionysiac poetic. Here is the poem in full:

> πέμπω σοί, Ῥοδόκλεια, τόδε στέφος, ἄνθεσι καλοῖς
> αὐτὸς ὑφ' ἡμετέραις πλεξάμενος παλάμαις.
> ἔστι κρίνον, ῥοδέη τε κάλυξ, νοτερή τ' ἀνεμώνη,
> καὶ νάρκισσος ὑγρός, καὶ κυαναυγὲς ἴον.
> ταῦτα στεψαμένη, λῆξον μεγάλαυχος ἐοῦσα·
> ἀνθεῖς καὶ λήγεις καὶ σὺ καὶ ὁ στέφανος.

[81] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) *ad loc.*
[82] Vian (1995) *ad loc.*
[83] See p. 134 n. 85.
[84] See Vian (1995) 164–5 for a copious catalogue of Nonnian flowers.

> (I send you this garland, Rhodoclea, that with my own hands I wove out of beautiful flowers. There are lillies and roses and dewy anemones, and tender narcissus and purple-gleaming violets. Wear it and cease to be vain. Both you and the garland flower and fade.)
>
> [*AP* 5.74]

Rufinus describes a garland of flowers which he has sent to Rhodoclea ('the fame of the rose'); it is an ephemeral gift which is meant to remind the recipient of the ephemeral nature of life. But not everything about Rufinus' flowers is ephemeral: τόδε στέφος suggests not only a real garland but also a poetic one.[85] It is the poetic arrangement of flowers (woven with the poet's own hands) which, we are encouraged to believe, will outlast any natural arrangement. Rhodoclea must realize that her natural bloom will fade, that the fame of her rose can only survive (ironically) in the form of a poem. I would suggest that Nonnus' fruits and flowers operate on a similarly symbolic level. His description of the grapes can be seen to symbolize of a new type of poetry, which is superior to all the flowers in the garden of literature.

This new form of poetry is not just superior, it is also all-embracing:

> ὅττι πολυτρίπτοιο νέαις λιβάδεσσιν ὀπώρης
> σὸν ποτὸν ἄνθεα πάντα δεδέξεται· ἓν ποτὸν ἔσται
> μιγνύμενον πάντεσσι, καὶ εἰς μίαν ἵξεται ὀδμήν[86]
> ἄνθεσι παντοίοις κεκερασμένον· εἰαρινὴν γάρ
> κοσμήσει τεὸν ἄνθος ὅλην λειμωνίδα ποίην.
>
> (For with the new-found streams of your crushed fruitage your drink will contain all flowers: that one drink will be a mixture of all, it will combine in one the scent of all the flowers that blow, your flowers will embellish all the springtime herbs and grass of the meadow.)
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> [12.240–4]

This description focuses attention not so much on the fruit of the vine as on the product which may be extracted from it. The image of the pool of wine offers a particularly suggestive way of consider-

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[85] In the 'Garlands' of Meleager and Philip, flowers have a clear poetic resonance. See the proems to both these Garlands, preserved at *AP* 4.1.1–2; 4.2.1–4: ἄνθεά σοι δρέψας Ἑλικώνια, καὶ κλυτοδένδρου / Πιερίης κείρας πρωτοφύτους κάλυκας, / καὶ σελίδος νεαρῆς θερίσας στάχυν, ἀντανέπλεξα / τοῖς Μελεαγρείοις ὡς ἴκελον στεφάνοις (Plucking for you flowers from Helicon and the first-born blooms of the Pierian forests, reaping the ears of a newer page, I have in my turn plaited a garland to be like that of Meleager). For poetic flowers in the Latin tradition see, for example, Roberts (1989) 49–51.

[86] A word with established poetic credentials: Nonnus' Bacchic fawn-skin is [1.36–7]: Μαρωνίδος ἔμπλεον ὀδμῆς / νεκταρέης (full of the perfume of Maronian nectar).

ing Nonnus' own literary production.[87] When fully 'processed', the *Dionysiaca*, will itself contain a vast range of ingredients (an encyclopedic range of mythological and historical material, covering an array of literary genres), such that it may fairly claim to be a single 'drink' that contains something of everything within it.[88]

Dionysus now goes on to give a detailed description of the relationship between the vine and the trees of the forest.[89] The section is worth quoting at length, since it offers a further important insight into Nonnus' view of his Dionysiac poetic. The image of the pool of wine afforded a glimpse of how we should consider Nonnus' completed poetic *product*; the image of the vine allows us to consider the *process* by which Nonnus will bring his plan to fruition, the way in which the poet intends to integrate, and thus contain, the entirety of Greek literature within the single form of the *Dionysiaca*:

ἀμφὶ δὲ δένδρεα πάντα κάτω νεύοντα καρήνῳ
εἴκελα λισσομένῳ κυρτούμενον αὐχένα κάμπτει,
ὑψιτενῆ δὲ πέτηλα γέρων ἐκλίνατο φοῖνιξ.
ἀμφὶ δὲ μηλείῃ τανύεις πόδας, ἀμφὶ δὲ συκῇ
χεῖρας ἐφαπλώσας ἐπερείδεαι. ὑμετέρην δέ,
δμωίδες ὡς δέσποιναν, ἐλαφρίζουσιν ὀπώρην,
εὖτε τιταινομένων πετάλων ἑλικώδεϊ παλμῷ
ἀμφιπόλων ὑπὲρ ὦμον ἀνέρχεαι· ἀγχιφύτων δὲ
ἁβρὰ πολυσπερέων ἑτερόχροα φύλλα κορύμβων
οἷα σέθεν κνώσσοντος ἐπαιθύσσουσι προσώπῳ
αὔραις φειδομένῃσι καταψύχοντες ἀῆται,
λεπταλέην ἅτε λάτρις ἐθήμονα ῥιπίδα σείει,
ψυχρὸν ἑῷ βασιλῆι φέρων ποιητὸν ἀήτην.

(All the trees of the forest bow their heads around, as one in prayer bends low the neck. The ancient palm-tree inclines his soaring leaves, you stretch your feet round the apple-tree, you clasp your hands about

[87] A neat example of the interplay between the worlds of Nonnus and Dionysus may be observed at 12.271: πᾶσιν ἐμοῖς μελέεσσιν ἐγὼ σέο πῶμα κεράσσω (I will mix my drink through all your limbs). This is not, I would argue, merely the reprise of a formulaic theme from 12.250 (Vian (1995) 101 n. 3). Μέλος can be used to designate 'limb' as well as 'song'; see the metaphorical use of κεράσω μέλος [25.11]. Here the line could be spoken equally well by both *actor* and *auctor*: the one absorbs the wine into his body, the other into his poem.

[88] Harries (1994) 64: 'the *Dionysiaca* covers enormous distances . . . These range from the *Iliad*, Hesiod, and Callimachus to the Alexander romances, from the *Odyssey*, Pindar and Attic tragedy to the erotic and sepulchral elegists. And that is to say nothing of . . . the possibilities suggested by Neoplatonist and Christian allegory'.

[89] Yet another example of the way that the vine/poetic grows, flourishes and establishes itself is provided by the second story of the invention of wine. We learn especially that the vine intoxicates other vegetation that grows nearby [12.309–10].

> the fig-tree and hold fast; they support your fruitage as slavewomen their mistress, while you climb over the shoulder of your maids with your tendrils pushing and winding and quivering, while the wind blows in your face the delicate many-coloured leaves of so many neighbouring trees with their widespread clusters, as if you slept, and they cooled you with gentle breath. So the serving woman waves a light fan as in duty bound, and makes a cool wind for her king.)
>
> [12.272–84]

The image of the vine provides a powerful and vivid metaphor for the image of Nonnus' new aesthetic, his way of writing poetry. Unlike other genres of poetry, the Dionysiac aesthetic has no distinct form of its own; rather, it relies upon existing genres to provide the very structure and form that it lacks. In this way it is able to maintain an astonishing mobility and achieve a wide impact, passing effortlessly over discrete boundaries. Nor is the relationship between Dionysiac song and established literary genres mutually beneficent. Whilst the appearance of these genres remains largely the same, they have nevertheless undergone a radical transformation: they no longer exist in their own right, but now play a supporting role in a new Dionysiac song. Images of religious piety and servitude point to the absolute dominance of Nonnus' poetic over all other literary forms. At the same time, however, this dominance is not seen as a violent or oppressive state: behaviour towards the vine is wholly respectful, as though directed to a revered deity or an esteemed monarch. Thus the slender Dionysiac poetic insinuates its way throughout the mighty forest of literature, and appropriates the entirety of that forest to itself.[90]

Nonnus' description of the invention of wine has placed two prominent images before us: the pool of wine and the vine. The images are complementary, but each offer their own distinctive insight into the poetic programme of the *Dionysiaca*. The image of the wine provides a model of the Dionysiac poetic brought to fruition—in the compendious (and capacious) product that we know as the *Dionysiaca*.[91]

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[90] The slender vine/tall tree dichotomy playfully reappropriates Callimachus' poetic credo [fr. 465]: μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν (a big book is a big evil).

[91] At the end of the episode of the invention of wine, Dionysus receives the amethyst from Rhea which will prevent him from madness [12.380–1]: μούνῳ δ' οἰνοποτῆρι Διωνύσῳ πόρε Ῥείη / λυσσαλέης ἀμέθυστον ἀλεξήτειραν ἀνάγκης (to Dionysus alone had Rhea given the amethyst, which preserves the wine-drinker from the tyranny of madness). Nonnus, we might imagine, as the inventor and propagator of Dionysiac song, must wear a charm to protect himself from the intoxication of his own poetry. But the amethyst is given to Dionysus (and Nonnus) alone. As readers of Dionysiac song we must inevitably run the risk of intoxication, risk a madness similar to that experienced by the company of satyrs.

However, Nonnus' unique way of writing poetry, his *process* of poetic production, is symbolized by the vine. His distinctive approach to poetry, the very nature of the Dionysiac aesthetic, will be one not of active creation, but of appropriation—and most especially transformation.[92] Nonnus' vine will transform the landscape of the literary world, dragooning material from every part of the Greek cycle of mythology, history and literature into the service of the story of Dionysus.[93] Dionysiac conversion will also frequently involve the infusion of an erotic element into the narrative.[94] Just as Ampelus dies and is brought back to life through wine, so Nonnus' erotic narrative (which dies with Ampelus) is not extinguished without trace, but is brought back to life as an essential component of the new Dionysiac poetic.[95]

The Poet of Dionysus II: The Road to War [13–24]

1. *Mission statement*

At the beginning of Book 13 Zeus sends important instructions to his son Dionysus. They are divided into two related, yet interlocking, parts: Dionysus is to defeat the Indian nation [13.3–6];[96] he is also to spread the message of the vine through all other nations of the world [13.6–7]. An investigation of both parts of Zeus's 'mission statement' to Dionysus, will assist our understanding of the mission which awaits Nonnus, armed as he now is with a new poetic weapon.

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[92] Compare Nonnus' proemial transformations at 1.16–33; see also the transformations of Zagreus [6.176–205], and Dionysus [36.293–333].

[93] Homer's *Iliad* is thus transformed from the story of Achilles to that of Dionysus; likewise, as we shall see, the *Hecale* of Callimachus is forced to undergo a transformation from pastoral simplicity to Dionysiac intoxication.

[94] It is interesting to note that Cadmus' pastoral song had an effect on Typhon which was likened to an erotic experience; Dionysiac song improves upon its poetic prototype by turning simile into reality.

[95] It might be objected that the elements which characterize Nonnus' poetic are far from new, and in no way unique. But this is a poem which (I would suggest) is happy to 'misread' literary tradition, to repackage transformative, eroticising qualities as a new and radical type of poetic experience.

[96] 13.1–6: Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ προέηκεν ἐς αὔλια θέσκελα Ῥείης / Ἶριν ἀπαγγέλλουσαν ἐγερσιμόθῳ Διονύσῳ, / ὄφρα δίκης ἀδίδακτον ὑπερφιάλων γένος Ἰνδῶν / Ἀσίδος ἐξελάσειεν ἑῷ ποινήτορι θύρσῳ, / ναύμαχον ἀμήσας ποταμήιον υἷα κεράστην, / Δηριάδην βασιλῆα (Father Zeus sent Iris to the divine halls of Rhea, to inform wakethefray Dionysus, that he must drive out of Asia with avenging thyrsus the proud race of Indians untaught of justice; he was to sweep from the sea the horned son of a river, Deriades the king).

a) *War against the Indians*

Zeus's message is delivered to Dionysus at his home at the court of Rhea by the goddess Iris [13.19–34].[97] She does not repeat Zeus's instructions word for word, in Homeric fashion, but provides a spirited elaboration on the same theme, urging not merely the *expulsion* of the Indian race but their annihilation:[98]

> ἀλκήεις Διόνυσε, τεὸς γενέτης σε κελεύει
> εὐσεβίης ἀδίδακτον ἀιστῶσαι γένος Ἰνδῶν.
> ἀλλὰ τεαῖς παλάμῃσι μαχήμονα θύρσον ἀείρων
> αἰθέρος ἄξια ῥέξον, ἐπεὶ Διὸς ἄμβροτος αὐλὴ
> οὔ σε πόνων ἀπάνευθε δεδέξεται, οὐδέ σοι Ὧραι
> μή πω ἀεθλεύσαντι πύλας πετάσουσι Ὀλύμπου.
>
> (Mighty Dionysus! Your father bids you destroy the race of Indians, untaught of piety. Come lift the thyrsus of battle in your hands, and earn heaven by your deeds. For the immortal court of Zeus will not receive you without hard work, and the Seasons will not open the gates of Olympus to you unless you have struggled for the prize.)
> [13.19–24]

These words apply with an equal validity to *actor* and *auctor* alike. After twelve books of epic experimentation, the poet has now reached maturity, has now acquired his own distinctive poetic. It is time for him to put this novel and transformative weapon to use, to prove himself as a master of the epic genre. The test of Nonnus' epic credentials will come not from small-scale engagement with individual Homeric scenes; he must produce his own epic narrative, the narrative of the Indian War. In the books that follow, we will witness Nonnus' own epic attempt to rescript the story of the Trojan War, most specifically his struggle in Books 25–40 to encompass within his own narrative

[97] As Vian (1995) 110 reminds us, the two speeches of Zeus and Iris (the one indirect, the other direct) must be read together if we are to understand Zeus's grand plan. It is noteworthy, however, that Dionysus only hears the second, more emotive speech of Iris. This leaves him under the impression that hard work in the Indian War will be sufficient to win him a place in heaven, with no reference to the efforts he must make to convert other nations to wine.

[98] Why does Iris vary the report she gives to Dionysus? The answer lies, I would argue, in Iris' reception at the court of Rhea [13.16–17]: θαμβαλέη δὲ πιοῦσα νεηγενέος χύσιν οἴνου / τέρπετο βακχευθεῖσα· καρηβαρέουσα . . . (Wondering she drank a sop of the new-found wine, delighted and excited; then with heavy head . . .). Iris changes her message because she is now intoxicated with the newly invented drink of Dionysus. Here we have our first demonstration of the effect of Dionysiac wine, and a clear indication of the transformative power of Nonnus' new poetic over Homeric epic, which causes Iris to lose her status as a wholly reliable epic messenger.

the martial narrative of Homer, epic poet *par excellence.* Right at the outset emphasis is laid upon the strenuous demands which lie ahead. Poetic immortality will not, however, be easily acquired: Nonnus must prove himself worthy of a place in the epic canon.

b) *Spreading the message*

The second part of Zeus's message is not directly reported to Dionysus by Iris [13.6–7]: καὶ ἔθνεα πάντα διδάξῃ / ὄργια νυκτιχόρευτα καὶ οἴνοπα καρπὸν ὀπώρης (Teach all nations the sacred dances of the vigil and the purple fruit of vintage). The phrase ἔθνεα πάντα recalls two similar phrases from the immediately preceding episode on the invention of wine—[12.241]: ἄνθεα πάντα and [12.272]: δένδρεα πάντα. As we have already seen, the reference to flowers and trees sustained an allusion to the different genres which will constitute Nonnus' poem. The phrase ἔθνεα πάντα has a similarly allusive quality: the poet is hereby instructed to introduce his Dionysiac poetic to the whole of the cycle of literature and mythology.

In the books that follow we will see how the Dionysiac poetic is introduced to a variety of genres. A large part of this process takes place *after* the narrative of the Indian War, in Books 40–8, but the process of literary intoxication is by no means exclusive to these books. The poet frequently takes 'time off' from his direct engagement with the genre of martial epic to introduce his poetic to other literary genres, including pastoral in Book 15 and Callimachean epyllion in Books 17–18.

2. *The advance of the Dionysiac Poetic*

a) *Epic*

After the double catalogue of troops in Books 13 and 14 the Bacchic forces march out to war against the Indians. This is the first time that Dionysus has had cause to use his newly invented weapon, the first time that we witness the powerful effect of the new Dionysiac poetic. We see at once what happens when Nonnian wine is poured into the traditional bottle of Epic.[99] The battle narrative starts traditionally enough: a host of Indians are decapitated by the Bacchants' weapons [14.395–6], and before long the earth runs red with blood

[99] *New* wine in old bottles; cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 10: 'The *Dionysiaca* both is and is not *old* wine in new bottles' [my emphasis].

[14.408–9]. At this point Dionysus feels an unepic pity for his enemy, and decides to drug the waters of the lake with wine [14.411]: καὶ προχοαῖς κατέχευε μέθης γέρας (he poured the treasure of wine into the waters).

The anonymous Indian who first samples the new drink sounds rather like a personification of martial epic, expressing amazement at the appearance of a new generic force [14.419–21]: ξεῖνον ἴδον καὶ ἄπιστον ἐγὼ ποτόν· ὡς γλάγος αἰγῶν / ἄργυφον οὐ πέλε τοῦτο, καὶ οὐ μέλαν οἷά περ ὕδωρ, / οὐδέ μιν οἷον ὄπωπα πολυτρήτοις ἐνὶ σίμβλοις . . . (Here is a strange and incredible drink I have seen! This is not the white milk of goats, not dark like water, nor is it like what I have seen in the riddled hives).[100] In no time at all the entire enemy force lies under Dionysus' control, conquered by the intoxicating delights of wine. The vine-god orders his troops to imprison the enemy, and issues an injunction to the Indian force [15.130–1]: καὶ πτολέμων ἀλάλαγμα λιπὼν καὶ θούριον ἠχὼ / εὔιον ἀείσειε κορυμβοφόρῳ Διονύσῳ (Let him leave the yell of wars and the din of spears, and uplift the Euian song to grape-laden Dionysus).

This looks like an unambiguous and comprehensive victory for the Dionysiac aesthetic over the traditional genre of epic. The Indian war, which was initiated in Book 13, *appears* to have been begun and concluded in the space of a single Bacchic revel. Having thus fulfilled the terms of Iris' speech (as set out at 13.19ff.) the vine-god would now seem close to joining his father in heaven. As if to confirm this notion, the hero is to be found apart from his merry company staring at Olympus [16.19–20]: καὶ Σατύρων ἀμέλησε καὶ οὐκέτι τέρπετο Βάκχαις· / παπταίνων δ' ἐς Ὄλυμπον . . . (He cared not for Satyrs now, he had now pleasure in Bacchants; but gazing at Olympus . . .). This is not the mountain of the gods, however, but a peak in Bithynia.[101] And the trials of *actor* and *auctor* are far from over. In fact, engagement with the epic force of the Indians has hardly begun:[102] Dionysus has not yet reached the territory of India proper, where Nonnus will engage in his own major battle to convert the narrative of Homer's *Iliad* into a Dionysiac form.

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[100] It would, of course, be useful to know more about other 'Dionysiac' epics, especially the *Bassarica*, in which Indian warriors might have seemed more 'traditionally epic' than they perhaps do to us now.

[101] Cf. Gerlaud (1994) 110 n. 1.

[102] As Nonnus reminds us, the contest is only half-completed [17.134–5 ~ 17.315–16]: ἡμιτελὴς γάρ / ἦεν ἀγών.

Long before this point, a line of epic figures will come to prominence who refuse to be 'integrated' into Dionysiac song. This line of resistance is first established by Astraeis, the only Indian at the lake who does not drink its drugged waters. He then gives the benefit of his experience to his leader Orontes [17.130–2]: ἀλλὰ ποτὸν πεφύλαξο, δορυσσόε, μὴ μετὰ νίκην / κερδαλέην ἀσίδηρον ἀναιμάκτοιο Λυαίου / ζωγρήσῃ δόλος ἄλλος ἐν ἄρεϊ λείψανον Ἰνδῶν (Avoid that potion, my shakespear! After this cheating victory of Lyaius without a blow, without blood, let not some other trick in the war capture what is left of the Indians). After the death of Orontes in battle against Dionysus, the line of resistance will be prominently sustained by Morrheus and finally the Indian commander-in-chief, Deriades.[103] For the moment, however, the attentions of Nonnus and Dionysus are directed away from epic and into the territory of pastoral.

b) *Pastoral*

It is in Book 15 that we are introduced to the shepherd Hymnus, 'an archetypal pastoral figure',[104] who falls madly in love with the maiden huntress Nicaea. She resists his advances and drives the shepherd to such a pitch of despair that he prays for death at her hands [15.316–17]. Nicaea duly grants Hymnus his wish and kills him with an arrow [15.363–9]. There follows an extensive pastoral lament which brings the book to a close [15.370–422]. Along with a company of nymphs, even the trees mourn his death—[15.390–1]: καὶ δρύες ἐφθέγξαντο—just as they did in Theocritus' *Idylls*, over the death of the goatherd Daphnis.[105] The lament is punctuated with a repeated pastoral refrain [15.399, 403, 409, 414]: βούτης καλὸς ὄλωλε, καλὴ δέ μιν ἔκτανε κούρη (The handsome oxherd has perished, a handsome girl has killed him). Harries has argued that we have here 'a lament not merely for the dead shepherd Hymnus but for the whole pastoral mode as an independent generic influence on the wider context of the poem'.[106] He goes on to suggest that Hymnus and Nicaea

[103] In response to Pherespondes (the hybrid messenger of multiform Dionysus) Deriades forcefully rejects the request that he accept the gift of wine [21.258–9]: οὐ δέχομαι ποτὸν ἄλλο μετὰ χρύσειον Ὑδάσπην· / οἶνος ἐμὸς πέλεν ἔγχος, ὁ δ' αὖ πότος ἐστὶ βοείη (I accept no other drink than golden Hydaspes. My wine is the spear, my potion too the shield!).

[104] Harries (1994) 72–3.

[105] Theoc. *Id.* 7.74: δρύες αὐτὸν ἐθρήνευν.

[106] Harries (1994) 74; cf. Harries (1994) 77: '[t]he stories of Pan and Brongus show pastoral instruments still performing their recognisable, though superseded function'.

symbolize two fundamentally incompatible influences within the poem: the pastoral and the Dionysiac.[107] He is certainly right to highlight the self-consciously poetic aspects of this scene. This is an episode which focuses attention on the power of the Dionysiac poetic and the poet's early attempts to put it to effective use. I would also agree that these books dramatize the relationship between pastoral and Dionysiac forces. Where I choose to depart from Harries' generic analysis, however, is in the symbolic meaning which he attributes to the maiden Nicaea.

There is no doubt that Hymnus is a pastoral figure; it is, to my mind, less certain that Nicaea is a Dionysiac figure.[108] In his attempts to win her for himself, Dionysus offers the girl a number of gifts including dappled fawnskins—[16.99]: νεβρίσι δαιδαλέῃσι—and even his thyrsus for hunting deer [16.140]: ἐλαφηβόλα θύρσα. She replies in no uncertain terms, promising Dionysus the same fate as befell Hymnus if he continues in his quest [16.156]; and gives a withering assessment of Dionysus' character [16.171–3]: οὐκ ἂν ἀκοίτην / ἁβροκόμην ἀσίδηρον ἀνάλκιδα θήλεϊ μορφῇ / εἶχον ἐγὼ Διόνυσον (I would not have Dionysus for bedfellow, softhaired, weaponless, spiritless, shaped like a woman). One could hardly find a figure more antipathetic to all things Dionysiac. It is clear then that Nicaea cannot be seen as a symbol of the new Dionysiac poetic which defeats pastoral: she is a figure who is *equally* resistant to pastoral and Dionysiac charms. A new way of describing her symbolic function must therefore be reached. I would suggest that Nicaea acts within the text as a kind of generic 'control'. In Book 15 we witness the shortcomings of Hymnus (and the pastoral genre which he represents) in his attempt to seduce Nicaea; in Book 16 we are given a chance to see how Dionysus will handle the same situation. This provides a good opportunity to gauge the relative success of the pastoral and Dionysiac genres.

To begin with Dionysus fares no better than his pastoral counterpart. For over half the book Dionysus wanders around in a folorn and love-lost state, unable to discover an effective way of seducing the wild huntress. The offer of gifts fails to move her [16.75–183], nor does the planned collusion with a hunting-dog secure a result

[107] Harries (1994) 76.

[108] Cf. Harries (1994) 73: 'Nicaea . . . is a Bacchic figure'. In support of this observation Harries (1994) 83 n. 67 suggests that 'In a number of respects her lifestyle seems to be equipping her to emulate the activities of the Bassarids (14.353–85)'.

[16.184–227]. Even trees take to mocking his lack of success [16.228–45]. And then would Nicaea have continued to rebuff his efforts, were it not for a pure stroke of luck on the part of Dionysus. In the heat of the day, the huntress takes a drink from a local watering-hole and falls into a drunken stupor [16.250–63].[109] Eros points out the incapacitated Nicaea to the love-mad Dionysus, with inevitable results [16.265–9]: καὶ δολόεις Διόνυσος . . . / . . . / κούρης δ' ἐγγὺς ἵκανε· καὶ ἀτρέμας ἄκρον ἐρυσσας / δεσμὸν ἀσυλήτοιο φυλάκτορα λύσατο μίτρης / φειδομένῃ παλάμῃ (And sly Dionysus . . . came near the girl: and softly with gentle hand undid the end of the knot which guarded the girdle of innocence).

The scene of Nicaea's seduction offers a graphic illustration of the superiority of the Dionysiac poetic over the pastoral mode. But what is most interesting here is the seemingly random nature of the victory. Dionysus did not consciously utilize the force of wine in order to effect the seduction of the girl; the result for him was a matter of pure serendipity. This observation in turn offers a suggestive insight into Nonnus' deployment of the Dionysiac poetic. At this point in the epic the poet is not yet in total control of his new poetic mode, nor has its full potential been explored. The Nicaea episode represents an important learning experience for both epic poet and epic hero. As will be seen later, the lessons learned here are certainly taken to heart: when Dionysus falls in love with the maiden Aura in Book 48, he *deliberately* drugs her water with wine.[110]

c) *Pan Politics*

The superiority of Nonnus' new poetic over the old world of pastoral in Book 16 is further reinforced by the actions of the figure of Pan. He celebrates the 'wedding' between Dionysus and Nicaea but is jealous none the less [16.321–2]: αἴθε πατήρ με δίδαξε τελεσσιγάμου δόλον οἴνου, / αἴθε νοοσφαλέος σταφυλῆς, ἅτε Βάκχος, ἀνάσσω (I wish my father had taught me the trick of that matchmaking wine! I wish I could be lord of the mind-tripping grape, like Bacchus). Armed with such a powerful weapon, Pan knows that he would be able to achieve his own erotic conquest of the nymph Echo; but as it is, only Dionysus is fortunate [16.337–8].

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[109] Unknown to her this was the same wine-polluted water which brought about the defeat of the Indians in Book 14.

[110] See pp. 201–2.

Pan's declaration, offers a commentary on the preceding episode of Dionysus and Nicaea; but it may well have a more pointed resonance. It has been long noted that the beginning of Pan's speech resembles the opening of an epigram by Cyrus of Panopolis, though which of the two poets imitates the other remains a moot point. Ludwich suggested that Cyrus imitated Nonnus,[111] an idea that has been recently endorsed by Cameron.[112] Friedländer asserted on the contrary that it was Nonnus who imitated his compatriot Cyrus.[113] He argued that while it was plausible to imagine that Nonnus had imitated a famous line by Cyrus, it was much more difficult to imagine the reverse, namely that Cyrus had imitated the opening part of two not especially memorable Nonnian lines.[114] Nor does Cyrus show any signs of having been influenced by Nonnian style and metre, in contrast with other imitators of the *Dionysiaca*. In 1986, Baldwin called the bluff of both camps by suggesting that the allusion was not in itself particularly striking, and that *neither* poet need have influenced the other.[115]

This feverish critical activity has nothing to do with poetry and everything to do with chronology. The date of Nonnus is notoriously difficult to pin down;[116] by contrast, Cyrus can be safely dated to the consulship of 441.[117] Hence, if the order of allusion between the two poets can be established, then Nonnus may be dated with a little more confidence. As we have just seen, however, it is possible to argue that the allusion flows in either direction, if indeed the allusion is there at all. Further speculation on this point might, therefore, seem futile. At the same time, if critics had actually taken time to consider the poetic implications of this scene, to consider what the point of the supposed allusion might be within the context of the poem, then they might have found a more convincing line of argument. Here is the Cyrus epigram in full:

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[111] Cf. Ludwich (1909) x.

[112] Cameron (1982) 239: 'There is more than a chance that Cyrus is the earliest extant reader of Nonnus'.

[113] Friedländer (1912) 44–6; supported by Lind (1934).

[114] Compare 20.372–4: <u>αἴθε πατήρ με δίδαξε</u> μετὰ κλόνον ἔργα θαλάσσης, / <u>ὥς κεν</u> ἀεθλεύσοιμι καὶ ἰχθυβόλων ἐς ἀγῶνα / ἀγρεύσας Διόνυσον (I wish my father had taught me not war alone, but how to deal with the sea! Then I would take a turn at the fishermen's game, and fish for Dionysus); see pp. 162–4.

[115] Baldwin (1986) 61: 'this surely unremarkable verse'. His suggestion is quoted, with some approval, by Gerlaud (1994) 135–6; cf. Hopkinson (1994a) 203.

[116] See Friedländer (1912); Lind (1934); Vian (1976) xi–xviii; Baldwin (1986).

[117] See e.g. Cameron (1982).

αἴθε πατήρ μ' ἐδίδαξε δασύτριχα μῆλα νομεύειν,
ὥς κεν ὑπὸ πτελέῃσι καθήμενος, ἢ ὑπὸ πέτρης
συρίσδων καλάμοισιν ἐμὰς τέρπεσκον ἀνίας.
Πιερίδες, φεύγωμεν ἐυκτιμένην πόλιν· ἄλλην
πατρίδα μαστεύσωμεν. ἀπαγγελέω δ' ἄρα πᾶσιν
ὡς ὀλοοὶ κηφῆνες ἐδηλήσαντο μελίσσας.

(Would that my father had taught me to shepherd fleecy flocks, so that, sitting under the elms or piping under a rock, I might cheer my sorrow with music. Let us fly, O Muses, from the stately city and seek another home. I will announce to all that the pestilent drones have done mischief to the bees.)

[*AP* 9.136.1–6]

The role which Cyrus has imagined for himself—that of a shepherd piping away his cares—is brought to life in Nonnus' presentation of Pan, whose pastoral credentials hardly seem in question: he is a master musician—[16.307]: ὑμνοπόλος Πάν—who has just been playing a wedding song on his shrill pipes [16.306]: λιγυροῖς δονάκεσσι γαμήλιον ἦχον ἀράσσων. He is also a devoted shepherd [16.325–6]: παρὰ γείτονι πηγῇ / ἀρδεύω τάδε μῆλα (I water my sheep here by a neighbouring spring).[118] Cyrus imagines that pastoral music will free him from his cares, a view which Nonnus reveals to be quite fallacious. Pan has both his pipes and his sheep, but he is *still* unhappy and filled with envy for Dionysus—[16.307]: ζῆλον ὑποκλέπτων ὑποκάρδιον—and the new force that has intruded into his pastoral world.[119] Nonnus' lines begin to look like a witty deconstruction of Cyrus' idealized pastoral world, one poet's correction and capping of the other. Pastoral poetry is not the way to solve one's cares, since Dionysiac song is the only possible cure for sorrow. As Pan himself says [16.336–8]: νυμφιδίης Διόνυσε μέθης θελξίμβροτε ποιμήν, / ὄλβιος ἔπλεο μοῦνος, ἀναινομένης ὅτι Νύμφης / εὗρες ἀοσσητῆρα γαμοστόλον οἶνον Ἐρώτων (O Dionysus, charmer of mortals, shepherd of the bridal intoxication! you alone are happy, because when the nymph denied, you found out wine, love's helper to deck out the marriage!).[120] When

[118] At 16.317–18 a satyr enjoins Pan to 'leave oxen and sheep among the rocks': καὶ παρὰ πέτρῃ / λεῖπε βόας καὶ μῆλα; the rocky landscape here may pick up on *AP* 9.136.2: ὑπὸ πέτρης.

[119] Friedländer (1912) 45 noted the significant difference between the two scenes but did not pursue the poetic implications: 'da [sc. bei Kyros] wünscht sich der Dichter die Schafe zu hüten; bei Nonnos wünscht sich der Schafhirt einen anderen Beruf'.

[120] Dionysiac song absorbs the vocabulary of pastoral: Dionysus has become a shepherd of drunkenness (ποιμὴν . . . μέθης).

Nonnus quotes the opening of Cyrus' epigram therefore, he sends a clear message to his fellow Panopolite.[121] He tells Cyrus (and all those who read his epigram) that pastoral poetry is a now spent force, that the only release from care is through Dionysiac poetry. And if the shepherd Pan delivers the message, then we know that it must be true.

An attempt to read the allusion in the opposite direction runs into significant problems. It is difficult to imagine that Cyrus would express longing to join the pastoral world, whilst at the same time inviting us to recall an episode in Nonnus' poem where pastoral had been superseded and was in no way capable of providing alleviation of cares. In that case we would assume that Cyrus would want to engage with Nonnus' thesis in some way, to attempt to show how in actual fact pastoral *is* superior to Dionysiac song. No such engagement is visible. If the allusion is there, then it is either unfortunate or downright perverse. A reference to the Nonnian episode which problematizes the pastoral world could only obscure the clear rhetorical contrast between town and country upon which Cyrus' epigram is based.[122] The most likely conclusion is therefore that Cyrus has not read the *Dionysiaca*, and that it is Nonnus who seeks to correct Cyrus' unambiguously optimistic picture of the pastoral world.[123]

d) *Callimachus and the* Hecale *epyllion*

Early in Book 17, on his way to fight with Orontes, Dionysus pays a visit to the hut of Brongus.[124] Like Pan, Brongus inhabits a distinctly pastoral world. However, in place of Pan's duplicity and eroti-

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[121] Cameron (1982) 238: '. . . Cyrus and Nonnus, both prominent poets, on any hypothesis close contemporaries and even fellow-citizens'.

[122] Cf. Cameron (1982) 234–5. Although Cameron claims that Cyrus is the first reader of the *Dionysiaca*, he fails to show how it is possible to make sense of the Nonnian allusion. His reading of the Cyrus epigram is not entirely satisfactory. Note the following observation: 'Since Cyrus was on the point of leaving to become a bishop, and given the wide currency of the metaphor, it is hard to doubt that the lack of instruction in "herding flocks" to which line 1 alludes was meant to evoke his new destiny at Cotyaeum' (235). The problem with this reading is that 'herding flocks' belongs to the world of the countryside which is closed to him. It is precisely because he is denied access to the countryside that he must seek out a new city, i.e. Cotyaeum. Further, Cameron chooses to read the 'drones' and 'bees' in the final line in political terms: 'the "bees" are the honest and industrious Cyrus, the "baneful drones" are those who have ousted him from the emperor's favour . . .' (235). It seems at least as obvious to understand the bees and drones as rival poets.

[123] It seems entirely in keeping with Nonnus' concerns about poetic paternity that he should have picked up on an epigram on that same theme.

[124] This brief and self-contained episode forms a thematic parallel with the story of Icarius and Erigone in Book 47.

cism we are introduced to a character unambiguous in his simplicity. He lives in an isolated hut, in a dwelling that cannot properly be called a house,[125] and offers Dionysus rustic hospitality: milk, olives and cheese [17.42–58]. Dionysus repays Brongus' kindness by introducing him to the new gift of wine—[17.72]: νεόρρυτον ἰκμάδα ληνοῦ—and teaching him how to cultivate the vine [17.83]: καί μιν ἄναξ ἐδίδαξε φιλάνθεμον ἔργον ἀλωῆς. This scene appears to fall into a pattern with which we are already familiar, whereby Nonnus infuses his new Dionysiac poetic into a traditional pastoral landscape. Brongus acknowledges the inferiority of his pastoral milk by accepting wine in its place. In the words of Harries, '[t]he "old milk", the ἀρχαῖον γάλα for which Brongus has a long established appetite (78), represents all in the pastoral world that is superseded by Dionysus' invention, and which the god rejects as incapable of relieving human anxiety (80)'.[126]

Brongus does not merely represent a stock pastoral figure: the meal which he provides contains a specific allusion to the world of Callimachus [17.52–4]: οἷα Κλεωναίοιο φατίζεται ἀμφὶ Μολόρκου / κεῖνα, τά περ σπεύδοντι λεοντοφόνους ἐς ἀγῶνας / ὥπλισεν Ἡρακλῆι ([He served a supper] such as they say in Cleonai Molorchus once provided for Heracles on his way to fight the lion). Nonnus makes certain that we do not miss the allusion: he refers us, via the playful φατίζεται,[127] to the Molorchus episode in Callimachus' *Aetia*.[128] The allusion is then doubled, since the next two lines refer us to a second Callimachean scene, from the *Hecale* [17.54–6]: χύδην δ' ἐπέβαλλε τραπέζῃ / εἰν ἁλὶ νηχομένης φθινοπωρίδος ἄνθος ἐλαίης / Βρόγγος, ἔχων μίμημα[129] φιλοστόργοιο νομῆος (Brongus, like that kind-hearted shepherd set on the table plenty of the autumn fruit of the olive swimming in brine). Nonnus has hereby adapted the idea of an adventurous hero, entertained hospitably by a simple peasant, from Callimachus' epyllion concerning Theseus and the old woman Hecale.

The general level of poetic allusion in this scene is given an extra edge of self-consciousness at 17.64–6, where Dionysus reacts to the

[125] 17.39–42: Βάκχον ἀνὴρ ἄγραυλος ἐρημάδι δέκτο καλιῇ . . . / . . . / . . . / ναίων οἶκον ἄοικον.

[126] Harries (1994) 77.

[127] See Hinds (1998) 1–5 for a general discussion of the 'Alexandrian footnote' [Ross (1975)], focusing on Cat. 64.2: *dicuntur.*

[128] For references and general discussion of Callimachean allusion throughout this scene see Gerlaud (1994) 129–34; 242–3; Hollis (1976, 1990).

[129] Brongus is both a literal and a literary imitation, alluding to Molorchus and Callimachus at the same time.

artless construction of Brongus' home: καὶ κραναοὺς πυλεῶνας ἐθάμβεε κυκλάδος αὐλῆς, / πῶς φύσις ἐργοπόνος δόμον ἔγλυφε, πῶς δίχα τέχνης / ἀντιτύποις κανόνεσσιν ἐτορνώθησαν ἐρίπναι (And he wondered at the stone doors of the round courtyard, how industrious nature had carved a house, how without art the cliffs were rounded in answering proportion). Nonnus' artful allusions to Callimachus consciously undercut the natural and uncontrived presentation of Brongus' hut. The wonder which Dionysus feels at the artlessness of the house, is paralleled by the reader's wonder at the poetic skill (and toil—πόνος), which has gone into the creation of this scene.

The presentation of the Brongus episode illustrates how Nonnus has introduced his poetic into the world of pastoral, and more specifically into the world of Callimachean epyllion. Allusion to the *Hecale* is reprised at the beginning of Book 18, when Dionysus pays a visit to the court of king Staphylus.[130] And it is thither, to Nonnus' most extensive (and undervalued) Callimachean reworking, that we now turn.[131]

In the first instance, it is notable that the description of frugal hospitality offered to Theseus by Hecale has been transformed into a scene of lavish entertainment.[132] Thus the son of Staphylus prepares a rich feast for Dionysus [18.68]: . . . ὥπλισε πιαλέης ἑτερότροπα δεῖπνα τραπέζης.[133] Unlike the dwellings of Hecale and Brongus, which were simple and artless, the palace which Staphylus shows to Dionysus is a dazzling artistic creation.[134] After spending the night as a guest of Hecale, Theseus rose early in readiness for the day ahead;[135] in an analogous fashion Dionysus leaps out of bed early [18.166–8]:

[130] Gerbeau (1992) 38–9.

[131] Hollis has a keen eye for Nonnian parallels which may help to elucidate the fragmentary text of Callimachus' *Hecale*; however, his 1990 edition contains not a single reference to the episode of Staphylus. Gerbeau (1992) 38–9 is the first to note the correspondence, though the brevity of her analysis suggests that she has not fully appreciated the significance of this allusion for the study of Nonnus and Callimachus alike.

[132] The contrast is pointed all the more emphatically through its juxtaposition with the preceding Brongus episode.

[133] Staphylus orders the slaughter of a herd of bulls [18.93–5] in contrast with the attempt of Brongus to sacrifice a single sheep—[17.46]: μίαν εἰροπόκων ὀίων—for Dionysus.

[134] 18.69–70: . . . ποικιλόδωρος ἄναξ ἐπεδείκνυε Βάκχῳ / κάλλεα τεχνήεντα λιθοστρώτοιο μελάθρου (The king of magnificent bounty displayed to Bacchus the artist's hand in the stonework of his hall).

[135] Fr. 64 Hollis; cf. *Dieg.* x. 31–2: πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἕω ἀναστάς (he rose towards dawn).

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥοδέοις ἀμαρύγμασιν ἄγγελος Ἠοῦς / ἀκροφαὴς ἐχάραξε λιπόσκιον Ὄρθρος ὀμίχλην, / εὐχαίτης τότε Βάκχος ἑώιος ἄνθορεν εὐνῆς... (But when the morning twilight, shining messenger of dawn, cut through the edge of fading mist with rosy sparkles, then long-haired Bacchus leapt up early from his bed).[136] It seems more than likely that Callimachus described the scene of leave-taking between the hero and the old woman;[137] Nonnus for his part provides us with an extensive farewell scene between Staphylus and Dionysus, which includes both the giving of gifts and the proffering of advice [18.210–307]. Unlike Theseus, however, who went on to engage in heroic combat with the bull, Dionysus undertakes a more peaceable mission and spreads the vine through the cities of Assyria [18.325–6]: Ἀσσυρίην χθόνα πᾶσαν ἑῆς ἔπλησεν ὀπώρης, / ἀγρονόμοις ὀρέγων σταφυληκόμον ἄνθος ἀλωῆς (He filled all the Assyrian land with his fruit, as he offered to the countrymen the grape-growing flower of the vineyard).[138]

After his victory, Theseus returned to the hut of Hecale and learned from neighbours that the old woman was dead.[139] Dionysus likewise returns to the palace of Staphylus and learns that the king is dead [18.337–9]: καὶ Πίθον ὡς ἐνόησε κατηπιόωντα προσώπῳ, / πότμον ἑοῦ Σταφύλοιο σοφῇ μαντεύσατο σιγῇ / αὐτόματος (Noticing the downcast looks of Pithus, he divined untold the fate of his friend Staphylus, proclaimed by the eloquent silence).[140] In Hecale's honour, the

[136] As Theseus spends only one night with Hecale, so Dionysus spends only one night at the court of Staphylus [18.40]: εἰς μίαν ἠριγένειαν ἐμῶν ἐπίβηθι μελάθρων (Enter my palace for one day).

[137] Hollis (1990) 214–15 suggests that Hecale's prayer to Zeus, for the safe return of Theseus, be placed at this point.

[138] Cf. Gerbeau (1992) 39: 'Nonnos s'est contenté de remplacer l'acte «héroïque» du combat contre le taureau par une tournée civilisatrice'. Dr. N. Hopkinson suggests that Theseus was in fact doing a good 'civilized' turn to the people by capturing the ravaging bull.

[139] Cf. Hollis (1990) 355–7 on problems relating to 'Theseus' Return from Marathon'.

[140] The words of lamentation uttered by Methe at 19.5–16 and 23–41 may contain faint traces of the description of Hecale's misfortunes (frs. 40ff. Hollis; cf. Hollis (1990) 187ff.). Like Hecale, Methe is now a widow [19.34–5]: χήρην μή με λίπῃς, μὴ διπλόον ἄλγος ἀέξω / καὶ φθιμένου Σταφύλοιο καὶ οἰχομένου Διονύσου (Leave me not a widow, that I may not cherish a double grief, Staphylus perished and Dionysus gone). It is easy to imagine that Hecale expressed a similar sentiment to Theseus; see Hollis (1990) 188 and his description of fr. 47: 'A woman, who has apparently lost at least one dear person already, apostrophizes someone else whom she is in danger of losing...'. The clearest contrast between the two is that Methe has wine to take away her cares, unlike Hecale who has only death.

Athenian hero named a deme after her, established an annual banquet, and dedicated a sanctuary to Zeus Hecaleus.[141] In Nonnus' version funeral games are celebrated around the tomb of the dead king,[142] and Dionysus offers up as prizes a goat and a bull [19.61–2]. The bull calls to mind the Marathonian beast captured by Theseus. Moreover, the choice of an Athenian dance as the subject for the competition—[19.66]: Ἀττικὸν ἐνθάδε κῶμον ἐγείρομεν (Here we begin an Attic revel)—recalls the explicitly Attic setting of the *Hecale*.[143] Finally, just as Hecale was immortalized in the name of a deme and a sanctuary of Zeus, so the names of Staphylus and the rest of his household are immortalized in the rites of Dionysus [19.53–5]: καί σε Μέθην καλέουσι κόρον τερψίμβροτον οἴνου· / Βότρυν ἐμῆς καλέσω λαθικηδέα καρπὸν ὀπώρης· / καὶ σταφυλὴν φερέβοτρυν ἀπὸ Σταφύλοιο καλέσσω (They will call you Methe, man's joy, the surfeit of wine. I will give the name of Botrys to the care-consoling fruit of my vintage, and I will call after Staphylus the carry-berry bunch of grapes).

The episodes of Brongus and Staphylus can be seen as two juxtaposed, though essentially self-contained, adaptations of the *Hecale*. The striking contrast between the poverty of the former and the opulence of the latter appears to exploit a reference in Callimachus' epyllion to the changed fortune of Hecale: she was not always a poor woman.[144] Nonnus has thus used the doublets of Brongus and Staphylus to provide us with two different versions of Hecale: one as the poor woman she now is, the other as the wealthy woman she once was.

Before concluding this discussion of Nonnus' transformation of the *Hecale*, I wish for a moment to turn attention to the scene in Book

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[141] On the honours accorded to Hecale see Hollis (1990) 263–9.

[142] 19.59–60: . . . Σταφύλοιο μεθυσφαλέος παρὰ τύμβῳ / νηπενθὴς Διόνυσος ἀπενθέα θῆκεν ἀγῶνα (Then beside the tomb of reeling Staphylus, Dionysus the foe of mourning held a contest where no mourning was).

[143] Cf. Gerbeau (1992) 79. At 19.81 Erechtheus competes in the funeral games: . . . Κεκροπίης ναέτης κιθάρην ἐλέλιζεν Ἐρεχθεύς (Erechtheus of Cecropia strummed his harp). His appearance here may allude to his earlier presence in the *Hecale*; see Hollis (1990) 226–9 on fr. 70, quoting frs. 1 and 86. The possibility that Nonnus has the *Hecale* in mind at this moment is strengthened by the reference to Cecrops: Callimachus' narrative described how the infant Erechtheus was entrusted to the care of the daughters of Cecrops [Hollis (1990) 229–31 on fr. 70—see esp. fr. 70.5 Hollis: Κεκροπίδ[η]σιν]. Hollis (1990) does not refer to the possibility of this double allusion.

[144] Fr. 41 Hollis: οὐ γάρ μοι πενίη πατρώιος, οὐδ' ἀπὸ πάππων / εἰμὶ λιπερνῆτις . . . (For poverty was not in my family, nor was I a pauper from my grandparents).

17 which is interposed between the two episodes of Brongus and Staphylus. I believe that a consideration of this neglected episode will shed further light on the scale and nature Nonnus' poetic ambitions. When Dionysus leaves the hut of Brongus, he sets out to do battle with the forces of Orontes [17.87–8]: καλλείψας δὲ νομῆα καὶ ἀγριάδος ῥάχιν ὕλης / εἰς ἑτέρην ἔσπευδεν ὀρειάδα φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν (Leaving the herdsman and the ridge of the wild forest, he now hastened to a new conflict with Indians in the mountains). Although the suggestion does not seem to have been made before, the fighting which occurs at 17.87–397 is obviously in some sense an imitation of Theseus' fight against the Marathonian bull. After enjoying rustic hospitality, Dionysus, like Theseus, goes out to fight. Although it is true that Dionysus does not fight against a bull, he does fight in the Bull Mountains [17.379; cf. 330; 18.45]: οὔρεα Ταύρου.[145] There is one particular scene fought out in the Bull Mountains which encourages analogy with the Theseus. When Orontes attacks a centaur—[17.208]: κενταύρου—he 'crushed the twisting horn on its bull-head' [17.210]: ταυρείην ἐπίκυρτον ἀπηλοίησε κεραίην. Hollis notes that this line seems to echo the wording of fr. 69.1: ọịọ́κẹρως· ἕτερον γὰρ ἀπηλọị́ηṣẹ κọρụ́νῃ (single-horned, for the club crushed the other). This allusion would add support to the suggestion that the mountain fight of Dionysus ironically re-enacts Theseus' own struggle at Marathon.[146] Furthermore, the centaur is said to roar as he falls to the ground, as a bull bellows when struck on the head [17.215–17]: καὶ κτύπον ἐσμαράγησε πέλωρ,[147] ἅτε ταῦρος ἰάλλων / τρηχαλέον μύκημα σεσηρότος ἀνθερεῶνος, / κρᾶτα τυπείς (And the monster let out a harsh roaring sound, like a bull struck on the skull which bellows horribly with grinning jaws). At some stage during the fight with Theseus, the Callimachean bull probably uttered a similar bellow.[148] Although the simile of the slaughtered bull looks back

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[145] Dr P. R. Hardie compares the play on 'bull' and 'mountain' (*taurus*/*Taurus*) at Cat. 64.105: *nam velut in summo quatientem brachia Tauro.*

[146] If this is indeed the case, then Hollis (1990) 218 is incorrect in his assertion that 'the context is quite different'; cf. Hollis (1976) 142 where it is asserted (enigmatically) that line 17.210 'to some extent preserves the original context'.

[147] Cf. fr. 69.3 Hollis: θῆρα πελώριον (a monstrous beast).

[148] Nonnus continues to exploit the image of the bull at 17.232–4: ἄκρα δὲ Βάκχου / κρατὸς ἀνουτήτοιο βαλὼν ὑπέροπλος Ὀρόντης / θηγαλέην Βρομίοιο μάτην ἤρασσε κεραίην (Orontes proud of his armament struck Bacchus on the top of his head, but wounded him not; he grazed the sharp horn of Bromius all for nothing); cf. [17.236]: ταυροφυῆ τύπον. Dionysus is, in one sense, an ironic version of the bull

to Homer,[149] it seems difficult, in the present context, not to sense the lingering presence of the bull from Marathon.

When Dionysus has concluded his battle in the Taurus Mountains, he advances to the court of Staphylus. This movement away from victorious battle and *back* to hospitality is clearly designed to parallel the *return* of Theseus to the hut of Hecale. Although Nonnus now chooses to rerun the entire story of *Hecale*, using a model of regal and not rustic hospitality, we are able to see how the episodes of Brongus and Staphylus are bound together not merely by juxtaposition, but by the narrative frame of Callimachus' epyllion. Nonnus' *Hecale* combines both episodes and stretches from Books 17–20. The length of this combined scene stretches to c.1000 lines, and may be seen as a conscious attempt to replicate the length of Callimachus' poem.[150] In this way Nonnus' imitation measures itself provocatively against one of the most influential poems of antiquity.[151] Callimachus has been both contained and transformed by the poet of Dionysus. First, the *Hecale* occupies a prominent position in the *Dionysiaca*; secondly, Nonnus has introduced the ingredient of wine into Hecale's world, where previously there was only milk. Callimachus, one of the most famous teetotallers in the whole of Greek literature, is thus forced to join in the intoxicating revels of Dionysus.[152]

3. *Poetic success and the poetics of succession*

The court of Staphylus in Book 18 not only forms an integral part of Nonnus' response to Callimachus' *Hecale*, it also provides a paradigmatic model of a paternal relationship, a model which can help us to understand better the ways in which both Dionysus and Nonnus engage with, and relate to, their own fathers. Staphylus and Botrys, father and son, provide a positive image of patriarchal succession,

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from Marathon. That bull had its horn sliced off by Theseus; Orontes is unable to break off Dionysus' horns because they are divine [17.241]: . . δαιμονίης ἄρρηκτον ἔχων βλάστημα κεραίης (he possessed the growth of divine horns which cannot be broken).

[149] See Gerlaud (1994) *ad loc.*

[150] See Hollis (1990) 337–40; 340: 'the usual estimate of 1000 lines for the *Hecale* perhaps has most to be said for it'. Nonnus' imitation of Euripides' *Bacchae* in Books 44–6 roughly replicates the length of the original.

[151] On the influence of *Hecale* see Hollis (1990) 26–35.

[152] Callimachus was scurrilously referred to as a drinker of water—ὑδροπότης—especially by the writers of epigrams, e.g. *AP* 11.31. See Knox (1985); Crowther (1979).

almost without parallel in the *Dionysiaca*. At the beginning of Book 18 King Staphylus rides out in his chariot to pay homage to Dionysus, with Botrys his son as driver [18.12].[153] Staphylus and Botrys seem to represent the perfect father and son combination. They work closely together and show no hints of tension; and with the addition of Queen Methe they form an exemplary family unit.[154]

Staphylus' behaviour towards Dionysus reads like an attempt to educate the young hero in the art of paternal succession. No sooner has Dionysus arrived at the royal court than he is instructed to act like his father [18.39]: καὶ σύ, φέρων μίμημα τεοῦ ξενίοιο τοκῆος (Do you now follow the example of your Father). As Dionysus prepares to leave the court and return to battle, the earlier advice is followed up at some length [18.217–18]: μάρναό μοι, Διόνυσε, καὶ ἄξια ῥέζε τοκῆος· / δεῖξον ὅτι Κρονίδαο φέρεις γένος (fight away, Dionysus, and do deeds worthy of your father! Show that you have the blood of Cronides in you!). And again [18.265–7]: γίνεο καὶ σὺ τοκῆι πανείκελος, ὄφρα καὶ αὐτόν / Γηγενέων ὀλετῆρα μετὰ Κρονίδην σὲ καλέσσω, / δήιον ἀμήσαντα χαμαιγενέων στάχυν Ἰνδῶν (Show yourself like your father, that I may call you also destroyer of the earthborn next to Cronides, when you have reaped the enemy harvest of earth-born Indians).

Here then is timely advice for both Nonnus and Dionysus.[155] After the first defeat of the Indians in Book 15 the narrative has moved largely away from the territory of war. Staphylus now urges the return to martial epic. Dionysus must imitate his father Zeus, just as Nonnus must follow in the footsteps of his father Homer. It is interesting here to observe the reaction which this speech has on its target audience [18.309–13]: ἐβακχεύθη δὲ κυδοιμῷ / οὔασι θελγομένοισι μόθον πατρῷον ἀκούων· / καὶ Κρονίδην νείκεσσε, καὶ ἤθελε μείζονα νίκην / ἐσσομένην τριτάτην, διδύμην μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν, /

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[153] Botrys' efforts at charioteering are noticeably more successful than those of Typhon, the metaphorical charioteer from Book 1: when he raises his whip, the horses do not rebel against his novice touch [18.44–6]. Compare the presentation of the charioteer Phaethon in Book 38. See p. 000.

[154] So, for example, after an intoxicating dinner, they dance *together* around the Hall [18.145–7]: Μέθη δ' ἐχόρευε καὶ αὐτή, / πῆχυν ἐπικλίνουσα καὶ υἱέι καὶ παρακοίτῃ, / μεσσατίη Σταφύλου καὶ Βότρυος (Methe was dancing too, with an arm round son and husband both, between Staphylus and Botrys).

[155] It is advice that sounds in many ways like a reprise of Iris' words to Dionysus in Book 13—especially the exhortation at 18.220–1: ἐπείγεο καὶ σὺ κυδοιμῷ Γηγενέων ὑπέροπλον αἰστῶσαι γένος Ἰνδῶν (On then and do your part in the struggle, destroy the overweening nation of earthborn Indians!).

ζῆλον ἔχων Κρονίδαο (His ears bewitched with hearing of his father's battle, he was wild for a fight, and wished for a third and greater future victory after the double defeat of the Indians to rival Cronides). The son reacts with unabashed enthusiasm and is eager to follow his father's example. However, alongside feelings of filial respect are signs of a new type of response. What we witness here is a sudden impulse of rivalry: an initial attempt to follow the example of the father has quickly metamorphosed into an attempt to surpass him.[156]

For the poet Nonnus, these words hint not just at the complexity of his relationship with Homer, but the inherent ambiguity. We are witness here to the changing dynamics of Nonnus' relationship with Homer: the poet's attempt to follow in the footsteps of his father (in the writing of an epic poem) now begins to resemble an attempt to rival his father. Poetic imitation shifts from an act of filial loyalty towards an act of paternal usurpation. A further point of clarification can be made. We have seen how Dionysus plans to surpass his father in a third, greater victory, set to take place after the double Indian War [18.312]. The initial 'double war' must refer to the victories over the Indians achieved first in Book 15, and then in Book 40. To what then does the third victory refer? For Dionysus, I would suggest, it looks forward to the battle he fights against the Titans in Book 48, where he demonstrates his capacity to achieve a successful result *without* the help of his father.[157] For Nonnus the notion of a greater victory—[18.311]: μείζονα νίκην—reflects (and characterizes) the movement which takes place in Books 40–8 away from a close relationship with his father (which reaches its climax during the books of the *Indiad*). It represents Nonnus' attempt to become master of his own poetic destiny and father of his own authentic epic song.

The Staphylus episode offers one more striking insight into the relationship between fathers and sons. The notion of succession, the action which turns a son into a father, has already been touched upon in this episode. The sudden death of King Staphylus,[158] whilst

[156] Where has this impulse come from? Staphylus' speech advises close imitation but certainly does not advocate filial insurrection. The answer is to be found in the opening lines of the king's grandpaternal story which describe the emasculation of Uranus by his son Cronus [18.225, 227, 228, 226]. It is this striking image of violent filial succession, which, I would suggest, has so excited Dionysus and stirred up feelings of rivalry towards his own father.

[157] See pp. 198–200.

[158] A death attributable to alcohol poisoning, if we are to believe Basset (1934–5).

Dionysus is away on a mission, now allows us to watch a very real act of succession, as Botrys takes over the role of his father. From the first moment of Dionysus' return to the palace (and even before he knows about the death of the King), the wheels of patriarchal succession have already been set in motion [18.334–5]: ὀψὲ δὲ δὴ παλίνορσος ἐρισταφύλων ἐπὶ δίφρων / νοστήσας Διόνυσος ἐδύσατο Βότρυος αὐλήν (It was late when Dionysus in his vinedecked car returned to Botrys' palace, remembering the amiable entertainment of Staphylus). So smooth, so effortless is the transition between father and son that we hardly notice Dionysus' return not to the palace of Staphylus, but to that of Botrys: the king is dead! Long live the king!

Dionysus numbs the pains of Botrys and Methe with wine, and sets up funeral games in honour of the dead king. When the games are over, Botrys, at the instigation of Dionysus, opens up the royal wardrobe, and sits down to feast in the robes of his father:

> οὐκέτι δ' αὐτοχύτοισι παρήια δάκρυσι δεύων
> Βότρυς ἀνεστενάχιζε, Διωνύσῳ δὲ πιθήσας
> φωριαμοὺς ὤιξε θυώδεας· οἰγομένων δὲ
> μαρμαρυγὴ σελάγιζε πολυγλήνων ἀπὸ πέπλων·
> κεῖθεν ἑλὼν Σταφύλου βασιλήια φαιδρὰ τοκῆος
> δύσατο πορφυρέῃ πεπαλαγμένα φάρεα κόχλῳ,
> καὶ θαλίης ψαύοντι συνειλαπίναζε Λυαίῳ.

> (Botrys lamented no longer or wetted his cheeks with helpless welling tears, but at Bacchus' bidding opened his scented coffers; as they opened sparkling gleams came from robes covered with gems. From these he took out and donned the brilliant royal garb of Staphylus his father, steeped in purple dye, and joined Lyaius at table to touch the feast.)
> [20.16–22]

Here, in the appropriation of his father's royal gowns, we witness the climax of Botrys' journey from son to father.[159] The removal of the clothes from the royal wardrobe recalls the Iliadic scene where Priam opens up his coffers to take out garments suitable for the ransoming of Hector [*Il.* 24.228–31]: ἦ, καὶ φωριαμῶν ἐπιθήματα κάλ' ἀνέῳγεν· / ἔνθεν δώδεκα μὲν περικαλλέας ἔξελε πέπλους, / δώδεκα δ' ἁπλοΐδας χλαίνας, τόσσους δὲ τάπητας, / τόσσα δὲ φάρεα λευκά, τόσσους δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσι χιτῶνας (Going to his coffers, Priam lifted their ornamental

[159] Hopkinson (1994a) 4 n. 3 describes the symbolic significance of these lines: 'Botrys reçoit l'investiture royale et succède à son père'. In Book 38 Phaethon will fail in his attempt to succeed his father, even though he has the correct costume; see p. 187.

lids and took out twelve beautiful robes, twelve single cloaks, as many sheets, as many white mantles, as many tunics to go with them).[160] Homeric resonance has already been stimulated by the preceding funeral games, which are themselves reminiscent of the games for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23.[161] Significant here, however, is not so much the similarity to Homer, but the difference. In *Iliad* 24 we watch Priam the father trying to come to terms with the death of his son, trying to recover the body of Hector for burial. In contrast, Botrys is the son who has buried his father and is trying to come to terms with the new role of actually 'being' his father, of dressing up in his clothes, appropriating his image and authority.[162] Priam's actions dramatize the breakdown of paternal succession: natural roles are inverted, as the father must make plans to bury the son. Nonnus restores the natural order of paternal succession, and it is again the son who makes plans to bury the father. Here, then, in the narrative of Staphylus and Botrys, lies a paradigm of paternal succession which both Dionysus and Nonnus would do well to follow.

4. *Contest and Contestation*

a) *Funeral Games*

In Book 19 funeral games are established in honour of the deceased king Staphylus, with two sets of contests, one musical, the other pantomimic.[163] As Dionysus sets out the prizes for the mime, he makes a point of highlighting his own unique nature in order to explain the unique nature of the contest [19.143–5]: οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ πάντεσσιν ὁμοίιος· ἀθλοφόρῳ δέ / ἀνέρι νικήσαντι χοροίτυπον ἁβρὸν ἀγῶνα / οὐ τρίποδα στίλβοντα καὶ οὐ ταχὺν ἵππον ὀπάσσω . . . (I am not like everyone else. To the prizewinner who conquers in the dainty beating of the dance, I will give no shining tripod and no swift horse). Dionysus does not just speak for himself here, but for the whole poem: the

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[160] Hopkinson (1994a) *ad loc.* does not explicitly mention this reference, directing attention instead to Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.808, 844, and [Orph.] *Argon.* 956. Compare Nonnus' reappropriation of this same Homeric scene at 46.108ff.

[161] To be discussed in the *following* section, 4. a.

[162] 20.104–7: ὤμοις δ' ἀκαμάτοισι περὶ κληῖδα φυλάσσων / φαιδρὸν ἁλιχλαίνων περονήσατο φᾶρος ἀνάκτων, / πατρῴην λαγόνεσσι βαλὼν ὑψήνορα μίτρην, / σκῆπτρον ἔχων (He threw over his unwearied shoulders the royal robe of bright purple cloth, pinning it with a brooch; his father's proud girdle was round his loins and the sceptre in his hand).

[163] See Gerbeau (1992) 72–112; Hopkinson (1994b) 30–1.

Dionysiaca is an epic which is indeed quite unlike anything that has been seen before. General differences are played out here on a specific level: in this scene Nonnus invites us to consider the difference and distance which his Dionysiac games manage to achieve in relation to traditional epic (and most especially Homeric) funeral games.[164]

The contest takes the form of a mime acted to music, and is arranged between two members of Dionysus' retinue: Maron and Silenus. Although both are clearly Bacchic figures, I would argue that their contest can be seen on a symbolic level as a continuation of the debate about how to write a successful epic poem. Like the poet of the *Dionysiaca*, both Maron and Silenus are narrators, tellers of stories—though they use their hands to write not on a page, but in the air.[165] They also tell similar kinds of stories: Maron describes nectar, the sweet drink—[19.214]: γλυκερὸν ποτόν—of the Gods; Silenus describes the quarrel between Dionysus and Aristaeus concerning the relative merits of wine and honey. The difference between these similar-looking figures is only discernible in the way in which they narrate their stories.

Maron first takes the stage and gives a skilful and controlled performance [19.220–1]: καὶ ποδὸς εὐρύθμοιο σοφὴν ἀνεσείρασεν ὁρμήν, / ἀσταθέος τελέσας πολυκαμπέα μέτρα χορείης (He lifted rhythmic feet with the motions of an artist, as he trod the winding measures of his unresting dance). Next up comes Silenus. His story does not lack τέχνη,[166] but it does lack control. When he reaches the end of his story he is unable to stop dancing [19.274–6]: καὶ πόδα λαιὸν ἄειρεν ἐπὶ πλευροῖο καὶ ὤμου / κουφίζων ἑλικηδόν, ὀπισθοτόνῳ δ' ὑπὸ τέχνῃ / καμπύλον ᾐώρησεν ἐπ' αὐχένι ταρσὸν ἑλίξας (He lifted his left foot coiling up to the side, to the shoulder, twining it behind him and

[164] Cf. Gerbeau (1992) 88: 'c'est dans ce discours que Nonnos, par le truchement de Dionysos, proclame son originalité par rapport à ses prédécesseurs'. Nonnus' main literary model are the funeral games for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23; cf. Gerbeau (1992) 74–7. Nonnus' rivalry with his predecessors is naturally intensified by the overtly competitive nature of funeral games; see Hopkinson (1994b) 31 (commenting on Book 37, though the sentiment applies equally well to Book 19).

[165] On Maron see 19.216–17: Γανυμήδεος ἔγραφε μορφήν / χερσὶν ἀφωνήτοισι (With voiceless hands he drew the figure of Ganymede); 19.219: τοῖα Μάρων ἐχάρασσε πολύτροπα δάκτυλα πάλλων . . . (So Maron sketched his designs in pantomime gestures); on Silenus see 19.225–6: πολυστρέπτοιο δὲ τέχνης / σύμβολα φωνήεντα κατέγραφε σιγαλέη χείρ (His hands without speech traced the cues of his art in all their intricate mazes).

[166] 19.267: ἑτεραλκέι πάλλετο <u>τέχνῃ</u> (He hopped skilfully from foot to foot); 19.278: ἐκάμπτετο κυκλάδι <u>τέχνῃ</u> (He artfully bent himself over).

holding it up until he brought the sole round his neck). His pantomime, no longer interpretable as narrative, has become an increasingly frenetic (and ultimately meaningless) series of gestures. Finally his knees give way, and the wildly dancing satyr is transformed into a river [19.287].

The fate of Silenus sends a clear warning to all would-be Dionysiac narrators. It is not enough to have ability; one must be able to control that ability. The exuberant and fluid quality of Nonnus' material must not be allowed to destroy its narrative form: Dionysiac wine needs to be contained within suitable bottles.[167] Silenus is someone who does not understand the necessity of control. As an unsuccessful contestant, he fits into an already familiar line of figures which stretches back via Typhon to Marsyas in the proem to Book 1. In fact, the connection between Silenus and Marsyas is explicitly drawn by Maron [19.316–18]: νήπιε, τίς σε δίδαξεν ἀρειοτέροισιν ἐρίζειν / Σιληνὸς πάλιν ἄλλος, ὑπέρβιον αὐλὸν ἀμείβων, / αὐχένα γαῦρον ἄειρε καὶ εἰς ἔριν ἤλυθε Φοίβῳ (Foolish one, who taught you to strive with your betters? Another Silenus there was, fingering a proud pipe, who lifted a haughty neck and challenged a match with Phoebus).[168] In his active engagement with his own poetic 'betters' (most especially Homer) we hope that Nonnus will replicate the controlled success of Maron over the chaotic failure of Silenus/Marsyas/Typhon et al. Maron is clearly symbolic of the preferred model of poetic composition, both skilful *and* controlled.

b) *Game Over?*

After the contest, Dionysus and company enjoy an intoxicating, carefree celebration, and all retire happily to their beds [20.1–34]. Celebrations resonate with allusions to the end of the Iliadic narrative: the Dionysiac reworking of Homeric funeral games in the preceding book is extended into Book 20, which opens with a direct quotation from the first line of *Iliad* 24—λῦτο δ' ἀγών—and goes on to rework the end of Homer's martial epic into a more distinctly Dionysiac form: where the Greek troops scatter to their individual

[167] To say nothing of the need for well-formed hexameters (the one feature of Nonnus' epic which receives high critical praise).

[168] See 1.41–4. Maron, like the first Silenus, is also present in the proem, at least allusively [1.36]: Μαρωνίδος ἔμπλεον ὀδμῆς. Cf. 19.328–9: καὶ σὺ δέμας μετάμειψας ἀρείονι νεῖκος ἀνάψας / Σιληνῷ προτέρῳ πανομοίιος (So you also have changed your shape by challenging one better than you, just like the earlier Silenus).

ships with thoughts on food and sleep,[169] the Bacchic forces all join together in the palace of Botrys for a party [20.1–34]. And although the Bacchic feast does make some gesture towards food—[20.4]: ἐπιδόρπιος—the main emphasis is on drink, the one element explicitly lacking in the Homeric account.[170]

At this point neither Dionysus nor Nonnus appear proactive and forward moving in their engagement with Zeus and Homer. Far from it: Dionysus looks like an epic warrior who has reached the end of his fight; whilst Nonnus' imitation of the end of the Iliadic narrative hints at closure, the end of his relationship with Homer and with the trials of martial epic. For both *actor* and *auctor*, however, this sense of an ending is quite illusory. Dionysus receives a rude awakening in the middle of the night, when he is visited in a dream by Eris (in the guise of Rhea). Eris complains that Dionysus is spending his time revelling when he should be turning his thoughts to war.[171] She claims that he is inactive—[20.56]: ἀεργέα—and does dishonour to the thigh of Zeus that brought him forth [20.61]: καὶ σὺ Διὸς γονόεσσαν ἐπαισχύνεις πτύχα μηροῦ. Eris' harangue, however deceptive and unjust it might be, offers an interesting perspective from which to judge Nonnus' poetic mission. If Nonnus is to gain a place in the canon through his engagement with Homer, then he is at this moment open to the same criticism that has been levelled at Dionysus, namely that he has forgotten about his mission and the arduous trials that lie ahead. In this sense, Nonnus too is 'inactive' and thus 'dishonours' the epic achievements of father Homer. Just as Dionysus has not yet reached the Indian War, so Nonnus has not yet begun to engage *directly* with the framework of the Homeric

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169 *Il.* 24.1–3: λαοὶ δὲ θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας ἕκαστοι / ἐσκίδναντ' ἰέναι. τοὶ μὲν δόρποιο μέδοντο / ὕπνου τε γλυκεροῦ ταρπήμεναι (The men scattered, each man to go to his own ship. They thought about their supper and the pleasure of sweet sleep).

170 The transformative power of Dionysiac song has quite literally cleaned up the end of the *Iliad.* The squalid figure of Priam—[*Il.* 24.163–4]: ἀμφὶ δὲ πολλὴ / κόπρος ἔην κεφαλῇ τε καὶ αὐχένι τοῖο γέροντος (And on the old man's head and neck was filth in abundance)—is paralleled by the figures of Methe and Pithus; unlike Priam, however, they do not remain in this state indefinitely [20.13–15]: καὶ Πίθον εὐρυγένειον ὅλον ῥυπόωντα καθήρας / ἀργεννῷ παλίνορσος ἀνεχλαίνωσε χιτῶνι, / ῥίψας πένθιμα πέπλα χυτῇ πεπαλαγμένα τέφρῃ (He cleansed broadbeard Pithus from the dirt which covered him, and threw away the mourning clothes smeared with ashes, then dressed him again in a gleaming-white frock).

171 20.44–5: ὑπνώεις, Διόνυσε θεηγενές· εἰς ἐνοπὴν δέ / Δηριάδης καλέει σε, καὶ ἐνθάδε κῶμον ἐγείρεις (You sleep, godborn Dionysus! Deriades summons you to battle, and you make merry here!)

narrative. It is clearly not enough merely to rewrite the ending of the *Iliad*, and to suppose that this is sufficient to gain the meed of poetic immortality.[172]

Eris goes on to say that the young hero is not like the other sons of Zeus [20.80]: οὐ σὺ Διὸς τεκέεσσιν ὁμοίιος. Dionysus has not shown prowess by killing either Otus, Ephialtes, Tityus, Orion or Argus [20.81–5]; instead [20.86–7]: παρὰ Σταφύλῳ καὶ Βότρυϊ κῶμον ὑφαίνεις, / ἀκλειὴς ἀσίδηρος ἐποίνιον ὕμνον ἀείδων (You weave your web of merriment with Staphylus and Botrys, inglorious, unarmed, singing songs over the wine). Again, the taunt is equally applicable to both *actor* and *auctor* at this point. Where Dionysus sings songs *over* the wine, Nonnus sings the *Dionysiaca*, the ultimate song *about* wine. And for the moment at least, it would be appropriate to call Nonnus ἀσίδηρος, since he is not engaged in a martial narration. As Eris' words imply, this type of story will no more bring Nonnus κλέος than Dionysus himself.[173]

Continuing her rousing speech, Eris suggests that there will be an appropriate time and place for celebrations *after* the Indian War; but that this is neither the time nor the place [20.91–3]. Her conclusion recalls and reiterates the words both of Staphylus and of Zeus/Iris (in the original double-statement which called Dionysus to arms) [20.94–7]: νόσφι πόνων οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνέμβατον αἰθέρα ναίειν· / οὐ πέλε ῥηιδίη μακάρων ὁδός· ἐξ ἀρετῆς δέ / ἀτραπὸς Οὐλύμποιο θεόσσυτος εἰς πόλον ἕλκει. / τέτλαθι καὶ σὺ πόνους πολυειδέας[174] (Without hard work it is not possible to dwell in the inaccessible heavens. The road to the Blessed is not easy; noble deeds give the only path to the firmament by God's decree. You too then, endure hardship of every kind). The notion of 'hard work as a key to success'—an early version of the Protestant work ethic—runs through the *Dionysiaca* almost as a leitmotiv.

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[172] The short-comings of Dionysus and Nonnus are thrown into relief by the exemplary figure of Botrys, who frames the dream (at 20.20–1 he puts on his father's robes; at 20.101ff. he leaps out of bed in eager preparation for war). It seems appropriate that the false dream which is sent to restart the missions of *actor* and *auctor* comes from *Iliad* 2, reminding Nonnus that his imitation of Homer is still in its infancy; that he has not yet done enough to prove himself a worthy successor to his father.

[173] Is there a hint of Odysseus on Ogygia with Calypso in these lines? Or Achilles in *Iliad* 9?

[174] Multiform labours suggest analogy with the multiform nature of both Nonnus and Dionysus: see esp. Nonnus' 'contest' with Proteus at 1.11–38. See pp. 117–19.

Eris has once again brought that notion to the fore, reminding us of the struggle that still awaits Dionysus and his poet Nonnus (in Books 25–40), before they can truly be said to have earned immortality.

5. *The Lycurgus Episode*

Spurred on by the deceptive dream, Dionysus makes his way into Arabia and the territory of the murderous Lycurgus.[175] At the same moment Nonnus ventures into Homeric territory with his rewriting of the Lycurgus episode at *Il.* 6.130–40.[176] Nonnus has here picked up the first of a very small number of references to Dionysus in Homer, and chosen to expand it to over forty times its original size.[177] In certain respects it is a curious episode upon which to have focused. Granted that it reveals the ultimate futility of Lycurgus' resistance,[178] the episode shows up Dionysus in a most unflattering light [*Il.* 6.135–7]: Διώνυσος δὲ φοβηθεὶς / δύσεθ' ἁλὸς κατὰ κῦμα· Θέτις δ' ὑπεδέξατο κόλπῳ / δειδιότα· κρατερὸς γὰρ ἔχε τρόμος ἀνδρὸς ὁμοκλῇ (Terrified Dionysus plunged under the sea-surge. In her arms Thetis received him, shaking from head to foot, after that yelling man's pursuit).

The theme of father-son relations is once again foregrounded in this episode.[179] When Iris denies that Zeus could ever have given

[175] Dionysus has already had a dream about his confrontation with Lycurgus at 18.74ff.

[176] See Hopkinson (1994a) 8–18, 41–53; (1994b) 25–6.

[177] Hopkinson (1994b) 25.

[178] Hopkinson (1994b) 25: 'Lycurgus typifies futile resistance to the god, and his defeat anticipates the greater victory of Dionysus over his chief enemy, the Indian king Deriades'.

[179] The confrontation which develops between Lycurgus and Dionysus establishes itself as that of two rival sons, each trying to assert and to validate his own relationship with his father. Lycurgus is described explicitly as a son who resembles his father Ares in his frightful habits [20.149–50]: ἔνθα τις, Ἄρεος αἷμα, μιαιφόνος ᾤκεεν ἀνήρ, / ἤθεσι ῥιγεδανοῖσιν ἔχων μίμημα τοκῆος (There lived a bloodthirsty ruffian, the ferocious Lycurgus, a son of Ares and like his father in his own horrid customs). Hopkinson (1994a) 27 n. 2 notes that the epithet μιαιφόνος is exclusive to Ares in the *Iliad*. The transference of epithet from father to son helps to legitimate their relationship; this bond is reinforced at 20.168–9 where Lycurgus offers sacrifices to his father, Ares: Ἐνυαλίῳ δὲ τοκῆι / δαιτρεύων ἱέρευε (Then he sacrificed them to Enyalius his father). Thus when Iris begins her exhortation (in the guise of Ares), she appeals explicitly to the connection between father and son [20.196]: τέκνον, ἀνικήτου σπόρος Ἄρεος (my son, scion of invincible Ares). Similarly, when she denigrates Dionysus, she does so by attacking the connection between him and his father [20.206–14].

birth to such a weedy child as Dionysus—[20.213]: Ζεὺς ἐμὸς οὐ δεδάηκεν ἀνάλκιδα παῖδα λοχεῦσαι (My Zeus never learnt to give birth to a weakling son)[180]—her words generate a wider metapoetic resonance: how could the weak and cowardly Dionysus ever be imagined an appropriate subject for epic? The marginal and ambiguous position that he occupies in Homer seems to point his unsuitability as an epic subject. At the same time, the very fact that he is present at all in the *Iliad* proves that Iris is wrong. Homer was responsible for 'giving birth' to the *Dionysiaca*, his ἄναλκις παῖς.[181] By confronting the episode of Lycurgus head on, Nonnus confronts the question of the suitability of Dionysus as an epic character. He does not shy away from the fact that Homer's Dionysus is a coward. As we shall see, he offers instead a revisionist explanation for that cowardice, an excuse for his unepic behaviour.

Dionysus runs away, we are told, not through fear of Lycurgus, but because he imagines that Zeus has turned his thunder against him [20.350–1]. After Dionysus has fled to the sea, Nereus urges him not to be so down-hearted. He reminds him that he has not been defeated by a mortal army, but rather by a consortium of gods: Hera, Ares and Aether [20.358–68]. He even goes so far as to say that in running away, Dionysus is actually following in the footsteps of his father [20.364–5]: ὑψιμέδων δέ / πολλάκι σὸς γενέτης πρόμος αἰθέρος εἴκαθεν Ἥρῃ (Often enough your father himself, the lord of heaven ruling on high, had to give way to Hera!).

Dionysus' retreat into the sea reveals not his cowardice but his power, his ability to cross boundaries. When he disappears beneath the waves, Lycurgus is left standing on the shore, lamenting the gap between himself and his father, in place of the usual close connection [20.372–4]: αἴθε πατήρ με δίδαξε μετὰ κλόνον ἔργα θαλάσσης, / ὥς κεν ἀεθλεύσοιμι καὶ ἰχθυβόλων ἐς ἀγῶνα / ἀγρεύσας Διόνυσον (I wish my father had taught me not war alone, but how to deal with the sea! Then I would take a turn at the fisherman's game, and fish for Dionysus). This, of course, is a reprise of the disputed first line of the

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[180] In pointed contrast with Lycurgus, who is described as follows [20.285–7]: οὐ μὲν ἄναξ Λυκόοργος ἀνάλκιδα θυμὸν ἀέξει· / ἔστι γὰρ Ἄρεος αἷμα Διιπετές, ἐν δὲ κυδοιμοῖς / πατρὸς Ἐνυαλίοιο φέρων ἐμφύλιον ἀλκήν (You know King Lycurgus has no coward soul. He is the son of Ares with the blood of Zeus in him).

[181] See p. 117 concerning the 'birth' of Nonnus from the 'thigh' of Homer.

epigram by Cyrus of Panopolis, which has already been considered above.[182] The verbal correspondence with Cyrus is even closer here than at 16.321–2, but this time there is no reference to the pastoral world. What then is the point of this second allusion to Cyrus? One answer would be that second time around the allusion has lost its explicit force, and that just as much as he is imitating Cyrus, Nonnus is imitating himself. But even if this is the case, what would be the point of Nonnus' self-reference? On the surface there seems to be little to connect the episodes relating to Pan and Lycurgus, except that in both cases the allusion is introduced at the beginning of their speeches. However, as will now be shown, the speech of Lycurgus, no less than that of Pan, marks a clear awareness of generic boundaries and limitations.[183]

Lycurgus wishes that he had been taught about the works of the sea—ἔργα θαλάσσης—the same phrase used by Oppian in the concluding passage of his *Halieutica* as a gloss for the contents of his book.[184] Lycurgus is stranded on the shore because he lacks the know-how provided by Oppian.[185] He continues [20.376–8]: ἀλλ', ἐπεὶ οὐ μάθον ἔργα θαλασσοπόρων ἁλιήων / καὶ βυθίης οὐκ οἶδα δολορραφέος δόλον ἄγρης, / Λευκοθέης ἔχε δῶμα βαθύρροον (But since I have not learnt the work of seafaring fishers, and know nothing of the tricks of hunting in the deep with a cunning mesh of nets, you may have Leucothea's house in the watery deep), using vocabulary that seems to invite pointed analogy with Oppian's poem.[186] Whilst Lycurgus complains that he has no knowledge of the sea, the vocabulary he uses ironically demonstrates Nonnus' familiarity with those same deeds of the deep—a further demonstration of the way in which Dionysiac song is capable of crossing boundaries.

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[182] See pp. 143–6.

[183] Dr N. Hopkinson observes the general similarity between Lycurgus' speech and that of the Cyclops in Theocritus *Id.* 11.

[184] Opp. *H.* 5.675: τόσσ' ἐδάην, σκηπτοῦχε διοτρεφές, ἔργα θαλάσσης (So much I know, o wielder of the sceptre, nursling of the gods, of the works of the sea); not noted by Hopkinson (1994a) 203, who points instead to θαλάσσια ἔργα at *Od.* 5.67 and θαλάσσια . . . ἔργα at Quint. Smyrn. 11.66.

[185] Given that Lycurgus here admits his ignorance of marine affairs, there seems to be a certain irony in Ambrosia's question to Lycurgus at 21.45: 'ἔκλυες εἰναλίην ἐχενηΐδα' (Have you heard of the seafish called 'ship-stopper'?): in the middle of their struggle, Ambrosia has found time to teach Lycurgus about the ἔργα θαλάσσης. Cf. Opp. *H.* 1.212–43.

[186] Hopkinson (1994a) 204 quotes from Opp. *H.* 1.305; 3.84. Note also 20.373; 382; 384: ἰχθυβόλων, ἰχθυβόλων, ἰχθυβόλοι, which intersect neatly with e.g. Opp. *H.* 3.27: ἰχθυβόλοι.

But Pan and Lycurgus are related by more than a superficial verbal allusion. They should be seen as essentially complementary figures, foils against which Nonnus sets his Dionysiac song. Just as Pan lacks the capacity to seduce unwilling maidens, so Lycurgus lacks the ability to cross distinct boundaries. Nonnus, I would suggest, has consciously reprised the allusion to Cyrus' epigram in Book 16, transforming its resonance from intertextual to intratextual, in order to continue his demonstration/dramatization of the superiority of Dionysiac song. One final observation still remains to be made concerning Lycurgus' sense of didactic frustration. In Cyrus' epigram it will be recalled that the narrator wished to be a figure like Pan, and in Book 16 Pan himself wanted to be a Dionysus figure. What sort of figure, then, does Lycurgus wish to resemble? The answer, unlikely as it may sound, is Pan. For although Pan is, obviously, a pastoral figure, this is not his only manifestation: as Oppian testifies, he is also an expert in deep-sea fishing [*H.* 3.15–16]: Πανὶ δὲ Κωρυκίῳ βυθίην παρακάτθεο τέχνην, / παιδὶ τεῷ (And you [sc. Hermes] delivered the art of the deep for keeping to Pan of Corycus, your son).[187]

6. *Epic Boundaries*

a) *Crossing the Hydaspes*

In Book 23 Dionysus embarks upon a crossing of the river Hydaspes, which will bring him at last into the territory of India proper and into direct confrontation with the Indian King, Deriades. This is a significant moment not just for Dionysus but also for Nonnus. In his advance through the Dionysiac cycle, the poet's engagement with Homer has become steadily more intense.[188] Skirmishes with traditional epic material from Book 13 onwards have now brought Nonnus close to the last year of the Indian War and to the territory of Homeric epic. The crossing of the Hydaspes will symbolize for Nonnus a transition to a new and daring mode of allusive engagement, an engagement that will bring him into direct confrontation with Homeric narrative. After countless attempts to imitate and transform a variety

[187] Oppian continues [*H.* 3.17–25] with a description of Pan's part in the saving of Zeus and the destruction of Typhon, a passage which is more than likely to have attracted Nonnus' attention: he was certainly aware that Pan was the son of Hermes and Penelope, as 24.86–7 makes clear.

[188] See pp. 106–7.

of Homeric scenes, Nonnus will now attempt the transformation (and absorption) of the entire Iliadic narrative into his own Dionysiac cycle.[189]

The 'crossing of the Hydaspes' functions as a suggestive symbol of Nonnus' own poetic crossing into the territory of epic. In the first place the crossing directly modelled on Achilles' fight with the river Scamander in *Iliad* 21.[190] The description of the Hydaspes as 'fed by Zeus'—[23.226]: Διιπετές—has an especially striking resonance: the reference is not directed merely to the rain that swells his water, but can also be seen to refer to the poetry of Homer, which sustains both the river and the entire episode of the crossing.[191] More particularly, the image of a river as a symbol for epic poetry has an established literary history of its own. In Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, the image of the Euphrates, a large and muddy river, was used to suggest an unflattering analogy with epic poetry [*Hymn* 2.108–9]: Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλά / λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἕλκει (Great is the stream of the Assyrian river, but for much of its course it drags along on its waters filth from the land and much refuse).[192] Like the Euphrates, the Hydaspes is certainly full of detritus [23.215]: καὶ ποταμὸς κελάδησεν ἀφυσγετὸν οἴδματι σύρων (The river moaned, dragging the mud in its rush).[193] It is quite possible that Nonnus is here exploiting the connection with Callimachus' 'muddy river' *topos*.

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[189] On the reworking of the narrative of the *Iliad* into the *Dionysiaca* see esp. pp. 67–95.

[190] See Hopkinson (1994b) 29–30; (1994a) 75–92. The opening line of Book 22 signposts the beginning of the Homeric allusion [22.1]: ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πόρον ἷξον ἐυκροκάλου ποταμοῖο (When they came to the crossing of the pebbly river)—a direct quotation (excepting the adjective ἐυκροκάλου (pebbly) for ἐυρρεῖος (well-flowing)) of the first line of *Iliad* 21. In fact, Books 22 and 23 together may be seen to represent Nonnus' reworking of *Iliad* 22, the episode during which Achilles fights with the river Scamander. A more obvious signal of this imitation occurs at 22.384–9: οὐδ' ἀθεεὶ πολέμιζε καὶ Αἰακός· ἀντιβίους γάρ, / ὡς γενέτης Πηλῆος, ἔσω ποταμοῖο δαΐζων / ἰκμαλέον μόθον εἶχε καὶ ὑδατόεσσαν ἐνυώ, / οἷα προθεσπίζων ποταμοῦ παρὰ χεῦμα Καμάνδρου / φύλοπιν ἡμιτέλεστον ἐπεσσομένην Ἀχιλῆι· / καὶ μόθον υἱωνοῖο μόθος μαντεύσατο πάππου (Not without God's help Aeacus also fought. As befitted the father of Peleus, he slew his enemies in the river, a watery battle, a conflict among the waves, as if to foretell the unfinished battle for Achilles in time to come at the river Camander: the grandfather's battle prophesied the grandson's conflict). As Hopkinson (1994b) 29 says, 'Here explicit reference to the fact that Aeacus is grandfather of Achilles makes a genealogical-cum-literary point similar to that of Nonnus' image of himself as descended from Homer (25.265)'.

[191] Homer is even the source for the word Διιπετές itself [*Il.* 21.326]: κῦμα διιπετέος ποταμοῖο (the surge of the heaven-fed river); cf. 24.10.

[192] See, for example, Hopkinson (1988) 87.

[193] Cf. 24.18–20. An explicit reference to the Euphrates may be found at 23.82.

Nonnus' symbolic crossing into the territory of father Homer is complemented by a clear emphasis on one of the most dominant and recurrent themes of the whole epic: paternity (along with the related anxieties of legitimacy and self-validation). Hydaspes is not just a river, nor even 'just' a generic icon: he is a father, to whom drowning Indians cry out in despair [23.79]. One such Indian cannot believe that rivers drown their own sons, and is able to think of only one exception [23.94–6]: Ῥῆνος Ἴβηρ βρεφέεσσι κορύσσεται, ἀλλὰ δικάζων, / καὶ κρυφίην ὠδῖνα διασχίζων τοκετοῖο / κτείνει ξεῖνα γένεθλα· σὺ δὲ φθιμένων ναετήρων / κρύπτεις γνήσια τέκνα καὶ οὐ νόθον αἷμα καλύπτεις (Iberian Rhine does indeed attack his own sons, but as a judge, when he marks off the illicit offspring of his race and kills the stranger-brat; but you [sc. Hydaspes] swallow up the lawful sons of your own perishing people—you drown no bastard blood).

Set within a clear imitation of a Homeric scene, this story has a pointed metapoetic resonance.[194] We are invited to think not only of the plight of Dionysus, but of Nonnus himself, once he has been thrown into the muddy river of epic. Will he sink or swim? Will his direct imitation of Father Homer prove that he is a bastard offspring or a legitimate son? Although Hydaspes does raise up his muddy waters against Dionysus, he fails to destroy him: Dionysus' fiery display forces the god of the river to admit that he is indeed dealing with the son of Zeus [24.13–14]. By analogy, Nonnus' own appropriation of the Homeric hexameters of *Iliad* 21 shows that he is a true son of Homer. His symbolic crossing of the river of epic—without being dragged down into it—provides us with an indication that the *Dionysiaca* is not to be another derivative, pastiche-filled version of Homer. Dionysiac song has not been overwhelmed by the filthy confluence of epic; its survival is a declaration of the distance and difference between this poem and other 'Homeric' epics.

Since Hopkinson (1994a) *ad loc.* notes that ἀφυσγετόν is a hapax in both Nonnus and Homer [*Il.* 11.495], it might be argued therefore that Homer is the point of allusion in this line. At the same time it is possible that Callimachus was himself inspired by the simile of the debris-filled river at *Il.* 11.492–7. Callimachus' description of *Hymn* 2.108–9:—τὰ <u>πολλὰ</u> / λύματα . . . καὶ πολλὸν . . . <u>συρφετὸν</u>—appears to refer back to an Homeric river simile [*Il.* 11.494–5]: <u>πολλὰς</u> δὲ δρῦς ἀζαλέας, <u>πολλὰς</u> δέ τε πεύκας / ἐσφέρεται, <u>πολλὸν</u> δέ τ' <u>ἀφυσγετὸν</u> εἰς ἅλα βάλλει ([As when a river] carries many a dry oak and many a pine in its course, and casts much driftwood into the sea). Nonnus' line is capable of sustaining an allusion to both Homer and Callimachus.

[194] See the detailed note *ad loc.* in Hopkinson (1994a). Nonnus returns to this same theme at 46.54–60.

b) *Celebrating failure*

After the successful crossing into India and the territory of Homeric epic, both *actor* and *auctor* are now set to begin the newest and most gruelling phase of their journey. Before the struggle can begin in earnest, however, the Dionysiac troops take part in a celebratory feast with musical entertainment. For Dionysus this is a time to relax and to enjoy the recuperative power of story-telling; for Nonnus (and his readers), at the prominent mid-way point of the *Dionysiaca*, it is a chance to meditate on the bold endeavour that lies ahead, to ponder once again the lesson of the doomed challenger. Entertainment is provided by Leucus the bard,[195] whose performance is clearly modelled on that of Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8: just as the singer Demodocus 'is generally taken as a self-representation of the narrator, who is himself a singer',[196] so, at some level, the bard Leucus can be taken as a self-representation of the narrator-poet of the *Dionysiaca.*[197]

The first of Leucus' songs is a Titanomachy, summarized by the poet in five lines [24.231–6]: Λέσβιος αὐτοδίδακτος[198] ἀνέπλεκε Λεῦκος ἀοιδήν, / πῶς πρότεροι Τιτῆνες ἐθωρήχθησαν Ὀλύμπῳ· / καὶ Διὸς ὑψιμέδοντος ἀληθέα μέλπετο νίκην, / πῶς Κρόνον εὐρυγένειον ὑποκλάζοντα κεραυνῷ / Ταρταρίῳ ζοφόεντι κατεσφρηγίσσατο κόλπῳ, / χείματος ὑδρηλοῖσι μάτην κεκορυθμένον ὅπλοις (Leucus the self-taught Lesbian singer wove his lay beside the mixing-bowl, how the older Titans armed themselves against Olympus. He sang the true victory of Zeus, potent in the Heights, how broadbeard Cronus sank under the thunderbolt,

[195] See especially Hopkinson (1994b) 21–2; (1994a) 147–63 and notes *ad loc.* for a detailed analysis of this scene.

[196] De Jong in Morris & Powell eds. (1997) 307.

[197] From the start, the narration of Leucus' songs in summary form, shows how Nonnus has taken over and appropriated for himself the role and function of the story-teller.

[198] Hopkinson (1994a) 275: 'le poète ne doit rien aux hommes; son inspiration lui vient uniquement des dieux'. The epithet αὐτοδίδακτος derives ultimately from *Od.* 22.347, where it is used to describe the bard Phemius. Since Leucus is explicitly described as αὐτοδίδακτος, it seems fair to ask whether this epithet may not apply equally well to Nonnus, in clear contrast to those characters in his epic who lack the necessary know-how to turn their mimetic dreams into reality. Typhon, Phaethon and Aphrodite are all to some extent ἀδίδακτοι. Typhon resembles 'an untaught man'—[1.311]: ἀνὴρ ἀδίδακτος; the novice son of the Sun, having tragically failed to heed the advice his father tries to give him, is described as [38.323]: Φαέθων ἀδίδακτος; Aphrodite suffers from a similar ignorance [24.244]: χερσὶν ἀπειρήτοισι μετήιεν ἱστὸν Ἀθήνης (She tried Athena's loom with unpractised hands). It would appear that Nonnus, like Leucus, has the capacity to be a successful singer of failure.

and Zeus sealed him deep in the dark Tartarean pit, armed in vain with the watery weapons of the storm). The theme of chaotic failure on a cosmic scale has already been treated by Nonnus on a grander scale, most notably in the Typhonomachy of Books 1–2. As was described earlier, Typhon's tumultuous advance through the opening books of the epic threatened to derail the course of the entire epic.[199] Here, at the mid-way point in the epic, there is less immediate reason for alarm. Whereas at the beginning of the *Dionysiaca* it appeared that Nonnus was struggling to control Typhon's destructive energy, a parallel explosion of violence in Book 24 is kept under tight control. By means of a five-line summary, the poet shows how much he has learnt from that first Titanomachic encounter.[200]

The second of Leucus' songs is recorded at greater length, though even at twenty times the length of the Titanomachy it remains a cameo piece.[201] It tells how Aphrodite falls in love with the loom and abandons the cestus for the spindle of Athena.[202] Aphrodite's neglect of the affairs of love soon begins to disturb the order of the cosmos: [24.272–3]: ἀλλὰ βίου μινύθοντος ἱμασσομένης τε γενέθλης / συζυγίης ἀλύτοιο μετωχλίσθησαν ὀχῆες (But life dwindled, birth was hardsmitten, the bolts of indivisible union were shot back). As with

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[199] See pp. 121–5.

[200] It may be appropriate to recall another scene which shows Nonnus controlling his Typhonic material, learning his lesson well from the chaotic scenes of Books 1–2. In the catalogue of troops which occupies Books 13–14, we meet an army from the region where Typhon's body lies buried [13.474–6]: καὶ Στατάλων κεκόρυστο πολὺς στρατός, ἧχι Τυφωεύς / θερμὸν ἀναβλύζων πυριθαλπέος ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ / ἔφλεγε γείτονα χῶρον (A great host came armed from Stataloi. There Typhoeus, spouting up the hot stream of the fiery thunderbolt, had kindled the neighbouring country). The priest of Lydian Zeus soon puts a stop to Typhon's renewed trouble-making and cuts him down to size not with weapons of steel but with verbal sallies [13.479–81]. Typhon is more afraid of the priest's linguistic barrage than of Zeus's thunderbolts [13.489–91]: οὐδὲ τόσον τρομέεσκεν ὀιστευτῆρα κεραυνοῦ / αἰνογίγας πολύπηχυς, ὅσον ῥηξήνορα μύστην / γλώσσῃ ὀιστεύοντα λάλον βέλος (That awful giant towering high, trembled not so much at the archer of thunderbolts, as for the battle-crashing magician shooting bolts of speech from his tongue). The priest who defeats Typhon with words acts as a suggestive doublet for Nonnus himself. This episode is referred to and briefly discussed by Hopkinson (1994b) 35 n. 44.

[201] Hopkinson (1994a) 155.

[202] 24.242–5: αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο Κύπριν ἀείδειν, / ὥς ποτε κέντρον ἔχουσα φιληλακάτοιο μερίμνης / χερσὶν ἀπειρήτοισι μετήιεν ἱστὸν Ἀθήνης, / κερκίδα κουφίζουσα καὶ οὐκέτι κεστὸν Ἐρώτων (So he struck up his harp and began to sing of Cypris, how she once felt the sting of ambition and felt the sting of the distaff, how she tried Athena's loom with unpractised hands and lifted the shuttle, no longer the girdle of love).

other failed challengers, Aphrodite's disruptive attempts at imitation have to be quashed before they can cause permanent damage [24.274–326].

Poetry about weaving invites consideration of the weaving of poetry.[203] The songs of Leucus are framed by explicit references to the weaving of song—[24.231]: Λέσβιος αὐτοδίδακτος ἀνέπλεκε Λεῦκος ἀοιδήν (Leucus the self-taught Lesbian singer wove his lay); [24.327]: τοίην ἱμερόφωνον ἀνέπλεκε Λεῦκος ἀοιδήν (such was the melodious lay which Leucus wove)—references which stand almost like posts on a loom. In between, in the lay of Aphrodite, the metaphorical force of ἀνέπλεκε becomes a witty reality through the synonymous use of ὕφαινε, as in [24.255]: κερκίδι πέπλον ὕφαινε. Hopkinson has described the poetic implications of this scene: 'Placed almost immediately before Nonnus' discussion of his own poetic practice at the beginning of Book 25, the tale of Aphrodite's weaving may be seen as a sampler of the Nonnian approach to epic'.[204]

The implications of this observation deserve to be pursued a little further. The figure of Aphrodite provides a potential doublet for the poet, a meditation on the dangers of imitation. Here we see the figure of a novice poet who pursues mimetic endeavours with great enthusiasm but no success. Indeed, Aphrodite has as much success with the distaff as Typhon had with the thunderbolts in Book 1.[205] The fruit of her loom is not fine and well-spun but 'coarse' [24.246]: παχύς and 'monstrous' [24.257]: πέλωρ (an image which perhaps evokes a resonance of the monstrous Typhon himself).[206] Aphrodite's attempts at imitation, again like Typhon, result in the most grotesque of parodies.[207] However, Aphrodite's example stands in humorous

[203] See Hopkinson (1994b) 38 n. 86; with this scene it might be instructive to compare Ovid's Arachne at *Met.* 6.1–145 (see, e.g., Harries (1990)).

[204] Hopkinson (1994b) 21–2. Cf. Hopkinson (1994a) 155: 'Il est en lui-même une performance poétique et on peut le considérer comme une reproduction en miniature des *Dionysiaques* dans leur ensemble, parce qu'il est un condensé des divers types de relations qu'un poète de l'époque tardive entretient avec les poèmes homériques. A ce titre, Nonnos est un authentique héritier des poètes hellénistiques'.

[205] Phaethon has similar difficulty with his chariot at 38.323–8.

[206] A further Typhonic resonance seems to be suggested by Athena's comment at 24.287: ἠὲ τίνας Τιτῆνας ἀπώλεσε θηλεϊ κεστῷ (What Titans has she destroyed with that womanish girdle?). Similarly Hermes' suggestion that Aphrodite weave Phaethon into her tapestry—[24.305]: τεῦχε τεῆς Φαέθοντα φεραυγέα μάρτυρον εὐνῆς (Put in Phaethon, the shining witness of your loves)—seems to link forward to the story of the younger Phaethon in Book 38.

[207] As Aphrodite produces her grotesque parody, so Nonnus creates a witty parody of that other more famous worker at the loom, Penelope [24.250–1]: ἡ δὲ

counterpoint to the grim destructiveness of the earlier *exemplum*. Unlike the *Dionysiaca*'s other challengers, Aphrodite is not subjected to extreme punishment. The laughter-loving goddess, whose incompetence has overthrown the natural order of the world, must suffer the other gods to laugh at *her* [24.321]: μείδησαν, ὅσοι ναετῆρες Ὀλύμπου.

The laughter of the Gods is enough to shame Aphrodite into abandoning her textile fantasies and returning to her natural functions [24.322–4]: καὶ μίτον ἡμιτέλεστον ἀπορρίψασα χιτῶνος / αἰδομένη Γλαυκῶπιν ἑῆς ἐπεβήσατο Κύπρου / ἀνδρομέης Κυθέρεια τιθηνήτειρα γενέθλης (Then Cytherea thus put to shame before Brighteyes threw down the stuff of the cloth half finished, and away she went to her own Cyprus to be nurse of the human race). The fate of this poetic doublet invites us to consider Nonnus' own mimetic project. Do we join with the Gods in their mocking response to the efforts of a try-hard artist? And is it the poet or the reader who contemplates abandoning the *Dionysiaca* at its half-way point, setting it aside in the same state as Aphrodite's textile [24.322]: ἡμιτέλεστον (half-finished).[208]

The Poet of Dionysus: The Indiad [25–40]

1. *Iliadic Core*

Both poet and hero have now reached the battleground of the Indian War. After twelve books of experimentation, the Dionysiac poetic now faces its most demanding test. It is a test which will show whether both Nonnus and Dionysus deserve the meed of immortality, whether or not they can show themselves to be worthy successors to their fathers.

In the first half of the epic we have watched, alongside Dionysus' developing relationship with his father Zeus, Nonnus' own poetic relationship with Homer. After an explicit reference to him in the proem, he is invoked at the start of the Indian campaign at 13.50–1 as a poetic help-mate: Ὅμηρον ἀοσσητῆρα καλέσσω. In Book 25 Homer

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πανημερίη καὶ παννυχίη πέλας ἱστοῦ / Παλλάδος ἔργον ἔτευχε παλίλλυτον (Then all day and all night long by the loom she undid the work of Pallas). The allusion is noted by Hopkinson (1994a) *ad loc.* The nautical metaphor in the preceding lines [24.246–9] is perhaps already meant to put us in mind of the world of Odysseus.

208 Dionysus was himself first dubbed ἡμιτέλεστον at 1.5; Phaethon is, by curious analogy, 'half-burnt'—[38.93]: ἡμιδαής—when he is blasted from the sky.

is invoked again directly as the model that Nonnus will now follow [25.8–9]: τελέσας δὲ τύπον μιμηλὸν Ὁμήρου / ὕστατον ὑμνήσω πτολέμων ἔτος (I will make my pattern like Homer's and sing the last year of warfare). The relationship has now reached its most intimate phase. As if to confirm this fact, when Nonnus asks his Muse to transport him back into the narrative of the Indian War, he asks that he be armed 'with the spear and shield of *father* Homer' [25.265]: ἔγχος ἔχοντα καὶ ἀσπίδα πατρὸς Ὁμήρου. The naming of Homer as father represents a climactic moment in Nonnus' poetic relationship; it is symbolic of the fact that his allusive engagement with Homer is about to enter a new mode. We have already had cause to comment on the ambiguous nature of relations between Nonnus and Homer in the proem to Book 1. Here in Book 25, the poet now redramatizes and explores further that disturbing feature of respectful imitation combined with audacious rivalry, within the framework of a patriarchal system, what Hopkinson has already well described as 'that blend of imitation and anxiety, obedience and rebellion, which has so often distinguished the offspring of famous fathers'.[209]

On the one hand Nonnus' addresses Homer in terms of undisguised admiration [25.253]: παμφαὲς υἱὲ Μέλητος, Ἀχαιίδος ἄφθιτε κῆρυξ . . . (O brilliant son of Meles, deathless herald of Achaea), begs his pardon for not singing about the Trojan War [25.255], and shows further respect for the divine poet when he declares that he will not set up Dionysus and Deriades to be compared to Achilles and Hector.[210] He also demonstrates just how much he needs Homer's help in his own epic endeavour [25.260–2]: ἀλλὰ λιγαίνειν / πνεῦσον ἐμοὶ τεὸν ἆσθμα θεόσσυτον· ὑμετέρης γάρ / δεύομαι εὐεπίης . . . (But breathe into me your inspired breath to sing my lay; for I need your lovely speech). On the other hand, Nonnus immediately allows us to see the tensions inherent in his imitation of Homer. He reminds us how much greater the Indian war is than its Trojan equivalent [25.23–7]: οὔ ποτε γὰρ μόθον ἄλλον ὁμοίιον ἔδρακεν Αἰών / Ἠῴου πρὸ μόθοιο, καὶ οὐ μετὰ φύλοπιν Ἰνδῶν / ἄλλην ὀψιτέλεστον ἰσόρροπον εἶδεν ἐνυώ / οὐδὲ τόσος στρατὸς ἦλθεν ἐς Ἴλιον, οὐ στόλος ἀνδρῶν / τηλίκος (for Time

[209] Hopkinson (1994b) 32; cf. (1994b) 12: 'this second proem veers, like the first, between admiration and emulation, between breathless respect for and ironical denigration of the Homeric epics . . .'.

[210] 25.255–6: οὐ γὰρ ἐίσκω / Αἰακίδῃ Διόνυσον ἢ Ἕκτορι Δηριαδῆα (I do not compare Dionysus to Aeacides, or Deriades to Hector).

never saw before another struggle like the Eastern War, nor after the Indian War in later days has Enyo seen its equal. No such army came to Ilion, no such host of men). He is also not afraid to level a certain degree of criticism at the immortal bard [25.257–8]: ὑμνήσειν μὲν ὄφελλε τόσον καὶ τοῖον ἀγῶνα / Μοῦσα τεὴ καὶ Βάκχον ἀκοντιστῆρα Γιγάντων (Your Muse ought to have hymned so great and mighty a struggle, how Bacchus brought low the giants).[211] Moreover, he is also disingenuous in his claim that he is *not* trying to compare his own heroes to those of Homer. Nonnus' presentation of Dionysus and Deriades naturally invites comparison with the Homeric characters Hector and Achilles,[212] and indeed, there are even times when the narrative explicitly demands that we make such comparisons.[213]

Throughout Book 25 the poet exploits and advances the parallel narratives of *auctor* and *actor*. To begin with, the literary syncrisis used by Nonnus to compare Dionysus with other heroes blurs into a poetic syncrisis between Nonnus and Homer. This is illustrated at 25.27–8: νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων / εὐκαμάτους ἱδρῶτας ἀναστήσω Διονύσου (I will set up the toils and sweat of Dionysus in rivalry with both new and old), where the rivalry refers to both competing heroes *and* poets.[214] Further conscious blurring of the boundaries between the world of the poet and the world of his characters comes at the point when Nonnus asks the Muse to transport him back to the narrative of the Indian War.[215] We are invited to see the poet not as a passive narrator, but as an active participant in his story: he will fight with the support of Homer [25.265], *alongside* Dionysus and his

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[211] Cf. 42. 181: ἐψεύσατο βίβλος Ὁμήρου (The book of Homer lied).

[212] Vian (1990) 254: 'Dériade peut être comparé à Hector, car il périra comme lui, abusé par un traquenard d'Athéna (40, 1–81)'. This ironic posture denies the very material which it will later provide. Cf. e.g. the teasing rhetorical strategies of Tacitus' *Annals* 4.32–3. There the historian tells how he will be unable to entertain readers with descriptions of battles and sieges. Yet this is precisely what he has provided for us on a metaphorical level; see Woodman (1988).

[213] See, for example, 22.385–9, where Aeacus' fight beside the river Hydaspes is described as a fore-runner of the Iliadic scene where Achilles fights Scamander.

[214] Vian (1990) 239: 'νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν désigne les poètes avec lesquels Nonnos entend rivaliser et non les «héros antiques et modernes» (Marcellus, suivi par Rouse)'. Vian is certainly right about the reference to ancient and modern poets; but he goes too far when he denies that the reference could extend to other heroes: Minos [25.148–74] is undoubtedly a 'new' hero when compared with an old-established hero like Heracles [25.174–252]. Such a double reading is perfectly consonant with Nonnian narrative strategies; cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 13.

[215] 25.264: ἀλλά, θεά, με κόμιζε τὸ δεύτερον εἰς μέσον Ἰνδῶν (Then bring me, O goddess, into the midst of the Indians again).

(supportive) father Zeus [25.267]: σὺν Διὶ καὶ Βρομίῳ κεκορυθμένον. Likewise, the noise of the Bacchic syrinx can be heard on the battlefield *at the same time* as the Homeric trumpet-call [25.267–9]: ἐν δὲ κυδοιμοῖς / Βακχιάδος σύριγγος ἀγέστρατον ἦχον ἀκούσω / καὶ κτύπον οὐ λήγοντα σοφῆς σάλπιγγος Ὁμήρου (Let me hear the syrinx of Bacchus summon the host to battle, and the ceaseless call of the trumpet in Homer's verse). And as Dionysus kills with his thyrsus, so Nonnus will 'kill what is left of the Indians with the spear of his imagination' [25.270]: κατακτείνω νοερῷ δορὶ λείψανον Ἰνδῶν.[216]

Dionysus' return to war with Zeus at his side is thus matched by Nonnus' return to the narrative of war, with Homer at his side. The narrative of the *Iliad* will act as a prop and support; Homer's epic will provide Nonnus' chief inspiration as he battles through the territory of martial epic, in the struggle to create his own *Indiad*.[217] It is, however, important not to play down the tensions and ambiguities which have already been highlighted in the relationship between the two poets. Nonnus is not only advancing into the territory of Homer, he is also advancing (to a certain extent) *against* Homer. With his own blend of emulation and competition, he is attempting not merely to replicate but to go beyond his epic father, to transform the *Iliad* into a Dionysiac narrative: a narrative which forms just one part of Nonnus' new, and all-embracing, cycle of poetry.

In the light of such filial anxiety brief reference ought to be made to an allusion at the beginning of Book 25 to the story of Oedipus [25.14–17]: ἐποτρύνων δέ με μέλπειν / πενθαλέην ἕο χεῖρα γέρων ὤρεξε Κιθαιρών, / αἰδόμενος μὴ λέκτρον ἀθέσμιον ἠὲ βοήσω / πατροφόνον πόσιν υἷα παρευνάζοντα τεκούσῃ (Old Cithaeron urges me to sing, stretching out his mourning hand, worried that I might proclaim the unhallowed bed or the father-slaying son, the husband who lay beside her who bore him). Critics have failed to see anything markworthy or significant in this allusion. I would venture to suggest, however, that this reference to Oedipus—the father-slaying husband-son in-bed-with-his-mother—has a powerful, and even sinister, significance in

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216 Note the resemblance here to the 'Nonnus' epigram [*AP* 9.198.1–2]: Νόννος ἐγώ· Πανὸς μὲν ἐμὴ πόλις· ἐν Φαρίῃ δέ / ἔγχεϊ φωνήεντι γονὰς ἤμησα Γιγάντων (I am Nonnus, and mine is the city of Pan. But it was on the Pharos that I harvested the race of giants with my vocal blade). This epigram establishes Nonnus as a character in his own poem and sets him up on a course parallel to that of his hero Dionysus.

217 Cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 13: 'the poet fights his own battle for recognition at the same time as he takes the part of Dionysus'.

the context of Book 25. It is important to remember that this reference (the sole reference to Oedipus in the entire *Dionysiaca*) occurs in the same book that refers explicitly to Homer as the *father* of Nonnus. It suggests that even before Nonnus has entered into the most intimate phase of his relationship with Homer, he is already contemplating a time when he will move beyond him.

2. *The Shield of Homer*

Nonnus' request for the shield of Homer is ironically granted when, towards the end of Book 25, Dionysus receives a shield clearly modelled on that presented to Achilles in *Iliad* 18.[218] This self-contained and skilfully wrought artefact invites comparison with the larger artefact of the *Dionysiaca*.[219] There are indeed striking compositional and thematic similarities between the two objects which will be considered in this section. Here first is the initial 'audience' reaction to the shield of Dionysus: [25.384–7]: ἀολλίζοντο δὲ λαοί, / ποικίλα παπταίνοντες Ὀλύμπια θαύματα τέχνης, / θαύματα μαρμαίροντα, τά περ κάμεν οὐρανίη χείρ / ἀσπίδα δαιδάλλουσα πολύχροον (Multitudes gathered to look at the varied wonders of Olympian art, shining wonders which a heavenly hand had made. The shield was emblazoned in many colours).[220] Readers of the *Dionysiaca* are presented with an opportunity to marvel at the τέχνη of Nonnus in his handling not just of

[218] The poet has forged his σάκος . . . πολυδαίδαλον [25.383] from distinctively Homeric material: Achilles' shield is called σάκος at *Il.* 18.478, 481, 607, 608; whilst πολυδαίδαλον occurs at *Il.* 11.32 (as noted by Vian (1990) *ad loc.*); cf. also *Il.* 18.479: δαιδάλλων; *Il.* 18.482: δαίδαλα πολλά. Whereas Homer described the shield of Achilles in the process of fabrication, Nonnus presents the shield of Dionysus as a finished artefact; cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 23.

[219] It is worth noting the description of both shield [25.384] and blacksmith [25.413] as σοφός. This word designates both demiurgic and poetic skill, as can be seen by Nonnus use of the word elsewhere: see esp. 5.138 where the necklace of Harmonia—a σοφὸν ἔργον—is the work of the craftsman Hephaestus *and* the poet Nonnus; cf. 25.1; 25.269. See pp. 52–5.

[220] Compare the concluding section of Nonnus' shield ecphrasis [25.563–7]: τοῖα μὲν ἐργοπόνοιο πολύτροπα δαίδαλα τέχνης / εἶχεν ἐνυαλίη πολυπίδακος ἀσπὶς Ὀλύμπου / Βακχιάς, ἣν ὁρόωντες ἐθάμβεον ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλῳ, / καὶ σάκεος τροχόεντος ἐκυκλώσαντο φορῆα, / ἔμπυρον αἰνήσαντες Ὀλύμπιον ἐσχαρεῶνα (Such were the varied scenes depicted by the artist's clever hand upon the warshield, brought for Lyaius from Olympus with all its becks and brooks. All thronged about to see the bearer of the round shield, admiring each in turn, and praising the fiery Olympian forge). By contrast, the soldiers of Achilles are too overawed to look directly at the immortal armour [*Il.* 19.14–15].

this Homeric set-piece, but of the epic as a whole.[221] Analogy is developed between shield and poem by the reference to ποικίλα . . . θαύματα [25.385]: it is not just the shield which is composed of such 'varied wonders', but the epic itself—described by its author in the proem to Book 1 as a ποικίλον . . . ὕμνον.[222]

Shield and poem do not only share similar aesthetic principles; they are also similar in terms of the technique of composition employed by each (divine?) craftsman. As Riemschneider has observed, Nonnus is obsessed by surface and the action of engraving upon it.[223] The graven image of the shield is thus neatly paralleled by the engraved artefact that is Nonnian epic. Surface is not, however, the only feature which connects the two artistic compositions. Just as images on the shield of Achilles exploit connections with the outer narrative (such as the description of the city under siege), so images on Nonnus' shield are not themselves without wider narrative significance.[224]

To begin with, Thebes, mentioned at 25.415, is the birthplace of Dionysus.[225] Nor has the relevance of Amphion, the musical builder of the walls of Thebes [25.419–28], passed unobserved: 'Here,' says Hopkinson, 'the supernatural power of music and song, and their ability to affect physical objects, are reminiscent of Nonnus' depiction of his poetry as a weapon in the fight against the foes of Dionysus'.[226] The abduction of Ganymede, already established by the main narrative as something of a favourite set-piece,[227] also features prominently on the shield [25.429–50]. The story of his abduction and apotheosis in the face of hostility from Hera is clearly reminiscent of the future story of Dionysus.[228] The difference is that it is hard work and not good looks that will earn Dionysus a place in

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[221] Cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 24: 'The τέχνη is . . . that of the artificer poet, who, though he might brandish the shield of Homer in singing of Indian defeat, contrives to forge a quite different shield with which symbolically to arm his hero'.

[222] 1.15. Cf. two further descriptions of the shield and its contents—[25.383]: πολυδαίδαλον; [25.563]: πολύτροπα δαίδαλα—with the proemial description of Proteus (the poet's kindred spirit) as [1.15]: πολύτροπον; [1.23]: πολυδαίδαλον.

[223] Riemschneider (1957).

[224] Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 2.274 does not seem convinced that the shield episode has any significance at all: 'Nonnos is more than usually tasteless in providing divine armour for Dionysus, who is divine already'.

[225] Maeonia, the nurse of Dionysus, also finds her way on to the shield at 25.451.

[226] Hopkinson (1994b) 24. Amphion's role in the future history of Thebes was referred to in the main narrative at 5.66–7 and (most recently) at 25.19.

[227] See, for example, 8.94ff.; 11.293ff.; 15.281–2; 31.252ff.

[228] Vian (1990) 34.

heaven. Most significantly, when Dionysus does attain to heaven he will have the status not of a lackey wine-pourer, but of a god. Ganymede functions as a possible doublet not only for Dionysus but also for Nonnus. Even if the poet does achieve literary apotheosis, even if people do read his work, will he achieve equal status with Homer? Or is he ever destined to be a cipher, the simple vessel out of which are poured the songs of Troy/India?[229]

Although it is treated only here in the *Dionysiaca*, the story of Tylus and Moria [25.451–552] develops ideas which are of great importance to the whole epic. As Vian has well described, 'elle traite d'un thème, «mort et résurrection», qui a des affinités avec le dionysisme, quelle que soit la vraie nature du héros ressuscité'.[230] The plant of Zeus which restores life to both the dead serpent and the lifeless Tylus clearly recalls the plant of Dionysus which sprang to life from the body of Ampelus in Book 12.[231] The final scene to be described on the shield is that of the birth of Zeus, and the trick that Rhea played on her husband Cronus to prevent him from devouring his new-born son [25.553–62]. The theme of perverted paternity is fundamental to Nonnus' epic. This specific episode has been alluded to and replayed on various occasions throughout the main narrative;[232] it serves as a particularly fitting climax both to the shield ecphrasis and to Book 25, since it is in this very book that Nonnus has chosen to reveal his poetic paternity and make explicit his kinship with 'father' Homer.[233]

Nonnus has depicted the shield of Dionysus as a world complete in itself, a cosmos with its own heaven and earth and sun and stars.[234] It can be seen as a poetic microcosm, a miniature version of Nonnus'

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[229] A Trojan wine-pourer indeed [25.431]: Τρώιος οἰνοχόος.

[230] Vian (1990) 34.

[231] Christian connections with the resurrection of Lazarus have not gone unnoted: cf. Vian (1990) 267–8.

[232] See, for example, 12.48–51; 21.254–6; 41.68–76.

[233] Cronus' relationship with his son Zeus forms an interesting point of contrast with Zeus's relationship with his own son Dionysus. Both fathers undergo a form of pregnancy and childbirth (compare the description of the births of Dionysus and Athena from 'mother' Zeus at 1.1–10). However, whereas Zeus sewed up Dionysus into the imitation womb of his thigh in order to protect his newborn son, Cronus attempted to swallow Zeus with the intention of killing him. We expect that Homer will follow the paternal model of Zeus, rather than that of Cronus. At the same time, this disturbing *exemplum* of perverted paternity, set in such an emphatic position, must give us pause for thought.

[234] See especially 25.387–412.

own universal epic. Not only does it extend, like the *Dionysiaca*, across the broad cycle of mythology, but it also engages with those same thematic concerns which crucially inform our reading of Nonnus' attempt to write epic and become a worthy successor to his father Homer. Nonnus will now returns to the narrative of the Indian War 'armed' with Homer's shield. It is, in some sense, a symbolic pledge, a surety that he is capable of the sustained Iliadic imitation with which he is even now beginning to engage. It stands as a sign both of his proximity to, and distance from, Homer; a sign that innovation is possible even within the confines of close imitation.

Before the shield of Nonnus is set down, a final moment of attention needs to be given not to the object itself, but to the character who is responsible for its transportation. In *Iliad* 18 it is Thetis who bestows the divine armour upon Achilles, her son; in the *Dionysiaca* the role is performed by Attis, emissary of Rhea, the adoptive mother of Dionysus. He is an appropriate messenger for Rhea, since he is traditionally connected with her worship in the form of Cybele;[235] more interestingly, his figure suggests certain ironic correspondences with that of Dionysus. Like Attis, Dionysus was once the charioteer of Cybele [9.191–3]. Both share feminine characteristics: Dionysus is naturally womanish;[236] Attis deliberately made himself effeminate [25.318]: δέμας θῆλυνε.[237] Where Zeus changed his own nature to bring forth Dionysus from his incised thigh, Attis changed *his* nature by cutting off his genitals.[238] This blood turns everything purple—rather like Dionysiac wine.

The most important difference between these two characters lies in their relative fecundity: whereas Dionysus is fertile and reproductive,[239] Attis is sterile [25.311]: ἄσπορος. The emasculated messenger can be seen as a parodic, grotesque doublet of Dionysus. He stands as a suggestive symbol of imitation gone wrong, a creative dead-end. His bestowal of arms upon Dionysus thus evokes an

235 See Vian (1990) *ad loc.*

236 See pp. 57–8.

237 The blood which spatters Attis' thighs runs purple [25.314]: φοινίξας. On the connection between purple blood and wine see 47.130.

238 Compare the emasculation of Uranus: Attis the self-castrator fulfils the roles of both Uranus and Cronus.

239 Dionysus' reproductive capacity is demonstrated during the Nicaea episode at 16.395–402.

interesting resonance, it raises a question-mark over Nonnus' own poetic fertility. Will his imitation of Homer cast him in the role of a fecund and successful Dionysus, or of a sterile and failed Attis? The position of this 'warning' at the beginning of the poet's *Indiad* could not be more appropriate.

3. *Crash and burn?*

Nonnus' epic battle with the narrative of the *Iliad* is now underway. The poet's struggle to rewrite Homer's *Iliad*, to contain it within his own Dionysiac epic, will last from Books 25–40. The tensions between Homer and Nonnus will now be played out across a broad canvas. The son will now attempt to negotiate the figure of his father, moving between the poles of obedience and rebellion, imitation and innovation: armed with his unique and transformative weapon, the Dionysiac poetic. To a large extent (though from a different angle) this story has already been told.[240] I do not intend here to recross ground which has already been covered in such detail elsewhere, but will proceed instead directly to the closing books of the Indian War, to see what lessons they may hold for our understanding of Nonnus' literary relationship with Homer.

a) *Poetic chariots and the chariots of poetry*

'[N]othing short of slavish' is the verdict of one critic concerning Nonnus' imitation of the funeral games for Patroclus in *Iliad* 23.[241] His damning view of *Dionysiaca* 37, the funeral games for Opheltes, has been echoed more recently by Chrétien, who suggests that Nonnus imitates his model 'avec servilité'.[242] Not even Vian, the world's foremost authority on the *Dionysiaca*, is prepared to defend Nonnus on this point: for him too, Book 37 is 'un'imitazione servile'.[243]

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[240] Nonnus' handling of the Iliadic narrative was considered at length in Chapter 2. See esp. pp. 67–95.

[241] Willis (1941) 397. Frangoulis (1995) provides a detailed examination of Book 37; though her focus is primarily metrical and not literary critical. See now Frangoulis (1999).

[242] Chrétien (1985) 74.

[243] Vian (1991a). Hopkinson (1994b) 41 n. 135 rightly reacted against this 'harsh judgement', though he did not provide compelling reasons to contradict it; (1994b) 31 defends Book 37 not on its own merits, but through an appeal to other more meretricious examples: 'The inventiveness of Nonnus' adaptations of Homer else-

The primary focus of this section will be to compare a single episode from Book 37 with its Iliadic 'archetype'. A detailed reading of Aristaeus' speech to his son Actaeon and Nestor's speech to his son Antilochus in *Iliad* 23 will show that critics have been overhasty in equating close imitation with derivative and unoriginal poetry. When transplanted from *Iliad* to *Dionysiaca*, the advice given by father to son about the forthcoming chariot race takes on a strikingly different resonance: it reads as advice coming directly from father Homer to his epic son, about how best to steer the chariot of poetry.

Judgements such as 'slavish' and 'servile' give the impression that Nonnus' text is so close to the Homeric original that it leaves no room for originality of its own. It suggests that Book 37 can offer nothing that is not already present in *Iliad* 23, that it has no important function within the wider narrative frame of the *Dionysiaca*. Before testing this assertion by means of detailed textual analysis, it will be useful to take a small detour. Let us suppose for a moment that Nonnus had taken his imitation one stage further, and that instead of close imitation he had directly transplanted the Homeric original into his text. How would we then react to Book 37? A similar question has recently been posed by Stephen Hinds in his work on the practice of allusive writing in Roman poetry. He describes a section of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which presents itself as a close imitation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. This stimulating (if rather convoluted) discussion is germane to our own inquiry:

> Our poet's allusive procedures in *Metamorphoses* 13.623–14.582 show how close he can come to repeating the *Aeneid* in the *Metamorphoses* while still writing poetry readable as Ovidian rather than as Virgilian. But let us suppose (in a variant of Borges' Pierre Menard parable) that Ovid's *Aeneid*, instead of being a c.1,000-line *tour de force* of miniaturization, foregrounding, backgrounding and metapoetic commentary, were nothing less than a full and complete, word-for-word c.10,000-line *citation* of Virgil's *Aeneid* inside the closing books of the *Metamorphoses*. Common sense suggests that these 10,000 lines would now read as Virgil's rather than as Ovid's: but can we in fact be sure? Reframed by the Ovidian poetry of *Metamorphoses* 1–13 and *Metamorphoses* 14–15, the foreground and the background of the *Aeneid*-citation would not remain undisturbed. Even in the absence of the tendentious editing characteristic of Ovid's actual 1,000-line summary of the *Aeneid*, those

where in the poem . . . should rule out the charge of plagiarism in the case of the games for Opheltes'. Most recently the accusation of 'servility' has been countered by Frangoulis (1999) 71.

> hints of metamorphic narrative in Virgil's original 10,000-line *Aeneid* (the Trojan ships, Diomedes' companions etc.) would already feel different, would already send signals which they did not send before the *Aeneid* was *re-cited* in the middle of the *Metamorphoses.* The very teleology of the *Aeneid*... would come under strong revisionary pressure from the rather different teleology of the framing *Metamorphoses*... Repetition, it is clear, *always* entails some alteration.[244]

Hinds (via Borges) well illustrates the care that must be taken before dismissing even the closest of imitations as servile and unoriginal. What happens if we attempt to map this same methodological approach onto Book 37? What would be the result if Nonnus had copied out *Iliad* 23 word for word, and presented it as Book 37 of his own epic? In that case, the very act of reframing would inevitably disturb the Iliadic citation. Just as hints of metamorphic narrative present in the *Aeneid* would feel different when that same scene was positioned inside the *Metamorphoses*, so hints of Dionysiac narrative (whatever that might mean) present in the *Iliad* would feel different when that same scene was positioned inside the *Dionysiaca.* Of course, Nonnus did not merely transcribe Homer; his imitation allows for the chance of a far more dynamic relationship with the Iliadic 'original'. It is now time therefore to consider the extent to which Book 37 represents a revised, altered and 'disturbed' version of *Iliad* 23. As I will suggest, Nonnus' close imitation of the funeral games of Patroclus provides us with a similar case of intertextual disturbance.

The chariot race is the first event to take place in the games of *Iliad* 23. Before the teams of horses are drawn up in position, Nestor passes on detailed instructions about the forthcoming race to his son Antilochus [*Il.* 23.301–50]:

> *although Antilochus is young, he is loved by Zeus and Poseidon; and they have taught him about horsemanship. For this reason there is little point in Nestor trying to advise his son. Nevertheless, the horses of Antilochus are slow and the boy will need all the advice his father can give him, if he is to defeat the swifter horses of his opponents. If Antilochus is cunning, he will steer his chariot so close to the turning-post that the inside wheel almost touches it. In this way he will gain the edge over his opponents (even though they have better horses), and he will be victorious.*

In Nonnus' version Aristaeus gives advice to his son Actaeon; it is almost identical in length to the Homeric original,[245] and very closely related in content [37.174–225]:

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[244] Hinds (1998) 120–1.

[245] Homer: 50 ~ Nonnus: 52; the full length of the two versions of the funeral games is also comparable: Homer: 897 ~ Nonnus: 778.

Actaeon is strong enough for the race, with both youth and courage on his side. He has the blood of Apollo, his grandfather, within him. What is more, his Arcadian horses are superior to all the others in the contest. But without cunning, his strength and horses will be useless. Actaeon must listen to his father and learn the tricks of the trade. The novice charioteer lets his horses wander out of control over the course; the cunning driver, even one with inferior horses, steers a straight course close to the turning-point—so close that his inside wheel almost touches it.[246]

In the Iliadic episode little emphasis is placed on the familial ties that bind together Nestor and Antilochus. The explicit connection between the two characters is only articulated at the beginning and end of Nestor's speech.[247] During the speech itself Nestor refers only once to the relationship between himself and Antilochus [*Il.* 23.343]: ἀλλά, φίλος, φρονέων πεφυλαγμένος εἶναι (No, son, keep your head). The contrast with the Dionysiac version is striking: Nonnus has over three times as many references to fathers and sons. The episode begins with a clear emphasis on filiation [37.175–6]: παιδὶ πατὴρ σπεύδοντι φίλους ἐπετέλλετο μύθους· / "τέκνον Ἀρισταίοιο περισσονόοιο τοκῆος . . ." (His father addressed these loving injunctions to his eager son: 'My son, your father Aristaeus has more experience than you . . .). Aristaeus tells Actaeon that he has 'the blood of his father' Apollo in him;[248] the son is urged 'then listen to your father, and I will teach you all the tricks of the horsy art which time has taught me, and they are many and various. Do your best my boy, to honour your father by your success'.[249] Actaeon is then instructed not only to learn from and honour his father, but also to 'prevail over his efforts' [37.194]: καὶ καμάτους νίκησον Ἀρισταίοιο τοκῆος.

[246] The most obvious difference between the two scenes concerns the relative ability of the horses. In the Iliadic account Nestor gives advice to his son in order to make up for the inferiority of his horses [*Il.* 23.309–10]: ἀλλά τοι ἵπποι / βάρδιστοι θείειν (But your horses are slowest in the race); see *Il.* 23.322: ἐλαύνων ἥσσονας ἵππους (driving inferior horses); cf. 37.203: ἔχων καὶ ἐλάσσονας ἵππους (he who has inferior horses). See also Nestor's description of the quality of the opposing teams of horses at *Il.* 23.346–8. In Nonnus' version, by contrast, the horses of Actaeon are the best in the race [37.179–80]: ἡμέτεραι δέ / κρείσσονες ἀίσσουσιν ἐπὶ δρόμον Ἀρκάδες ἵπποι (Our Arcadian mares are stronger than any for the race). The Dionysiac version, by upgrading the ability of the horses, places an even greater emphasis on the need for cunning than is present in the Homeric original: where Antilochus might have won with a fast team of horses, Actaeon is reminded that not even fast horses are a guarantee of victory [37.181–2].

[247] *Il.* 23.302: Νέστορος ἀγλαὸς υἱὸς ὑπερθύμοιο ἄνακτος . . . (the noble son of the great king Nestor); *Il.* 23.350: . . . ἕζετ', ἐπεὶ ᾧ παιδὶ ἑκάστου πεῖρατ' ἔειπε (he went back to his seat, after he had told his son the ways of achieving each thing).

[248] 37.179: πάτριον αἷμα.

[249] 37.185–7: ἀλλὰ σὺ πατρὸς ἄκουε, καὶ ἵππια κέρδεα τέχνης, / ὅσσα χρόνῳ δεδάηκα πολύτροπα, καὶ σὲ διδάξω. / σπεῦδε, τέκος, γενετῆρα τεαῖς ἀρετῇσι γεραίρειν.

It is no exaggeration to say that the theme of paternity is central to the *Dionysiaca*. As we have seen, the narrative of the epic traces Dionysus' on-going, anxious, relationship with his father Zeus; it follows his efforts to prove himself a worthy (and legitimate) son by imitating the deeds and successes of his father. The increased emphasis which Nonnus thus places on the theme of paternity in this particular scene fits neatly into an existing discourse. Inevitably this new emphasis, like the emphasis on metamorphosis in Ovid, 'disturbs' our reading of the original Homeric episode. We are invited to reflect that the Dionysiac obsession with paternity is to some extent already present in the *Iliad*, that Homer is a very Nonnian kind of poet.[250]

The fact that Nonnus imitates an episode from his 'father' Homer that is itself concerned (at some level) with paternal relations creates a striking poetic resonance. It is possible that the advice given by Aristaeus to his son can be read as advice coming straight from Homer to his own poetic son. Nonnus is reminded that he has strength enough for his epic undertaking [37.177], and the sufficient blend of youth and courage [37.177–8]. As an epic poet like his father, it is not a surprise to find that Nonnus has the blood of Apollo flowing in his veins [37.179].[251] By way of general advice, the young poet must become a worthy imitator of his father Homer [37.187], but he must also strive to cap his achievements [37.194]. The voice of Homer, projected through the figure of Nestor/Aristaeus thus speaks directly to Nonnus.

Aristaeus gives to his son specific advice about the art of chariot-racing; he is well placed to do so, since he himself is greatly experienced [37.185–6; 224–5]. By analogy, Homer, the grand veteran of the chariot of epic, would seem to be more than qualified to give advice to his poetic son. Where Actaeon must display his horsemanship in order to win the race, Nonnus must use his poetic skill to achieve victory [37.195]: ἱπποσύνην δ' ἀνάφαινε, φέρων τεχνήμονα νίκην (Show your horsemastery, win your event like an artist).[252] He should take heed of the fate of the unskilled/novice poet, who fails

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[250] Nonnus thus inverts literary tradition, and forces the *Iliad* to come *after* the *Dionysiaca*; cf. p. 210 n. 14.

[251] Compare Nonnus' proemial reference to the god of poetry at 1.41: Φοῖβον ἐμόν (my Apollo).

[252] Frangoulis (1999), following Keydell (1959), emends to νίκης; I follow Marcellus and Rouse in preserving the reading of the manuscript L.

to keep a tight rein over his narrative [37.196–8]: ἐπεὶ κατὰ μέσσον ἀγῶνος / ἄλλος ἀνὴρ ἀδίδακτος ἀπόσσυτον ἅρμα παρέλκων / πλάζεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα . . . (For without instruction one pulls the car off the course in the middle of the race, it wanders all over the place).[253]

In order to avoid this fate, Nonnus is given some specific advice about steering his poetic chariot [37.203–6]: ἡνίοχος πολύμητις . . . / ἰθύνει . . . / ἐγγὺς ἀεὶ περὶ νύσσαν ἄγων δρόμον, ἅρμα δὲ κάμπτει / ἱππεύων περὶ τέρμα καὶ οὔ ποτε τέρμα χαράσσων (The cunning driver . . . keeps straight . . . keeps a course ever close to the turning-post, wheels his chariot round, without ever scratching the mark). What exactly does this mean? How is it possible to understand the turning-point—νύσσα—in poetic terms?[254] A solution to this problem only becomes apparent when we recall that Book 37 represents Nonnus' *closest* engagement with Homer, his most detailed and sustained imitation of any part of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.[255] Homer advises Nonnus that the way to epic success lies in close imitation. And close imitation is precisely the tactic employed by Nonnus in Book 37. Nonnus, a poet whom by now we expect to be 'well-versed in the tricks of his trade'—[37.202] τεχνήεντι δόλῳ μεμελημένος—steers his chariot of poetry as close to the Iliadic νύσσα as possible, without actually touching/transcribing it.[256]

The poetic strategy discussed in Book 37 has important implications for the way we view the wider narrative of the *Dionysiaca*. As a chariot moves towards the turning-post, so Nonnus can be seen advancing gradually towards direct engagement with his Homeric model. In Books 1–12 Nonnus experiments with a variety of literary models and begins to articulate his distinctive voice. From Books 13–24 Nonnus advances into the territory of epic, moving ever closer to India where his direct imitation of the narrative of the *Iliad* will

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[253] The phrase ἀνὴρ ἀδίδακτος has a clear poetic resonance—lack of learning was an important contributory factor in the mimetic failures of Typhon [Books 1–2] and Aphrodite [Book 24]; cf. the description of Phaethon in these same terms at 38.323.

[254] Compare the metaphorical use of νύσσα at 37.6.

[255] See p. 84.

[256] Not only does Nonnus try to steer the chariot of poetry through an episode concerned explicitly with chariot racing, but also he competes with Homer in the arena of Homeric competition; cf. Hopkinson (1994b) 31: '[Nonnus] has made his closest and most direct attempt at Homeric emulation in an episode that is concerned more than any other with competitiveness'.

begin. Nonnus' *Indiad* properly begins in Book 25 and reaches its closest and most sustained point of imitation, as we have seen, in Book 37. Only three books later a profound change will be noted in the relationship between the two poets: the conclusion of the Indian War in Book 40 will be seen to mark the end of Nonnus' direct engagement with the Homeric narrative.

Here then is a large scale narrative realization of the advice which was presented in the speech of Aristaeus, about how to negotiate successfully the post of Homeric epic, and to move on beyond it into new territory. After thirty-six books, Nonnus' relationship with Homer is now so close, his engagement with the narrative of the *Iliad* so intimate, that the text of the *Dionysiaca* has become almost indistinguishable from Homer's. The younger poet cannot steer any closer to Homer without literally transcribing/copying his words. After the turning-post has been safely and successfully rounded Nonnus is 'free' to move away from Homer—and this is exactly what he will attempt to do in the last eight books of his epic.

Success in such a venture is, of course, by no means assured. Aristaeus' speech makes more than clear the potentially lethal consequences of close imitation [37.214–15]: ἀλλὰ λίθον πεφύλαξο, μὴ ἄξονι νύσσαν ἀράξας / εἰν ἑνὶ δηλήσαιο καὶ ἅρματα καὶ σέθεν ἵππους (But watch out for the stone, or you may strike the post with the axle against the turning-post and wreck both horses and car together). Nor can it be forgotten that Actaeon is ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt to win the chariot race.[257] This specific emphasis on failure links in to a wider network of mimetic failures and doomed challengers which have already been noted at prominent moments throughout the epic: in Books 1–2 Typhon fails spectacularly in his bid to usurp the position of Zeus and take control of the heavens; in Book 24 Aphrodite is forced to abandon her incompetent attempt to use the spindle of Athena (and in Book 38 we are introduced to Phaethon and his failed attempts to steer the chariot of the Sun). Nonnus does not want us to forget that imitation is a difficult and dangerous game, that audacious challenges to authority have a habit of ending in spectacular failure.

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[257] Actaeon only finishes in third place [37.477–8]. During the race he does not appear to use the advice which his father gave him; he thinks up a δολίην . . . βουλήν [37.351] of his own, and uses it to sabotage the chariot of Phaunus. For Actaeon, however, the writing is already on the wall: as far back as Book 5 Nonnus narrated the story of Actaeon's gruesome demise at the hands—or rather paws—of his hunting hounds.

b) *Phaethon*

Although the story of Phaethon is positioned only one book after the funeral games of Opheltes, the connections between these two narratives have never been explored. It seems no coincidence that the tragic story of a young charioteer and his efforts to control the car of his father, the Sun, should be introduced so soon after the chariot race of Book 37. In fact, the Phaethon episode offers a thematic mirror into which the speech of Aristaeus is reflected; it provides a detailed meditation on the difficulties and dangers of imitation. Once again the episode focuses on the relationship between a father and son; once again the son's attempts to control the chariot of his father can be read in metapoetic terms, symbolic of Nonnus' ongoing struggle to write epic poetry. The positioning and content of this episode increases our awareness of the dangers which beset Nonnus in his attempt to ride the chariot of his father (and also no doubt increases our respect as we watch the poet's ultimate success).

At the beginning of Book 38, after the funeral games of Opheltes have drawn to a close, two omens appear in the sky above the Bacchic troops: an eclipse of the sun [38.15–25], followed by the fall of a snake into the river Hydaspes [38.26–9]. The plummeting snake is interpreted by the seer Idmon as a prophecy of the death of the Indian chieftain Deriades [38.64–9]. The solar eclipse, whose general significance has already been touched on by Idmon, is now explained to Dionysus by his brother Hermes: it foretells victory for Dionysus in the Indian War [38.78–89]. This in turn causes Hermes to recollect *another* marvel, the story of Phaethon.[258] The story of Phaethon is now told in order to give pleasure to Dionysus;[259] but like the episode of Calamus and Carpus in Book 11, much of the pleasure is derived from the fact that the story is relevant to the present situation, offering a view of the world in a symbolic form. Phaethon's fatal fall into the Eridanus can be seen as a complementary explanation of the omen of the snake, symbolic of the fall

[258] 38.90–3: τηλίκον οὔ ποτε θαῦμα γέρων τροφὸς ἤγαγεν Αἰών, / ἐξότε δαιμονίοιο πυρὸς βεβολημένος ἀτμῷ / κύμβαχος Ἠελίοιο φεραυγέος ἔκπεσε δίφρου / ἡμιδαὴς Φαέθων (So great a marvel ancient eternal Time our foster-father has never brought, since Phaethon, struck by the stream of divine fire, fell tumbling half-burnt from Helius' lightbearing chariot).

[259] 38.106–7: εἴ σε παλαιγενέων ἐπέων γλυκὺς οἶστρος ἐπείγει, / μῦθον ὅλον Φαέθοντος ἐγὼ στοιχηδὸν ἐνίψω (If sweet desire constrains you to hear these ancient stories, I will tell you the whole tale of Phaethon from beginning to end).

of Deriades into the Hydaspes.[260] Dionysus is listening to a re-enactment of the main theme of the Indian War, that of 'cosmic order briefly compromised by reckless folly'.[261]

The young Phaethon longs for his absent father, Helius, and in his absence constructs a mimic version of the chariot of the Sun.[262] Substituting four young rams in place of horses, Phaethon sets off round the island of Thrinacia,[263] in explicit imitation of his father [38.180–3]: ἀμφὶ δὲ χαίταις / ὄρθιον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα φεραυγέα δαλὸν ἐρείσας / ψευδομέναις ἀκτῖσιν ἑὸν μιμεῖτο τοκῆα, / ἱππεύων στεφανηδὸν ἁλίκτυπον ἄντυγα νήσου (He set burning torches standing about his hair on every side, and mimicked his father with fictitious rays as he drove round and round the coast of the sea-girt isle).[264] The young Phaethon forms a suggestive doublet for the epic poet at the start of his literary career, fantasizing about the moment when he might drive the real chariot of epic poetry.[265] The pastoral setting of Phaethon's childhood—[38.168–70]: πῆ δὲ καὶ αὐτῆς / Θρινακίης λειμῶνα μετήιεν . . . / . . . βόας καὶ μῆλα νομεύων . . . (Sometimes he even travelled to the meadows of Thrinacia . . . tending cattle and sheep)—is especially suggestive of the pastoral landscape evoked in

[260] Both snake and young charioteer are described as αὐτοκύλιστος when they fall [38.29, 411]. A familial connection between Phaethon and Deriades is established at 26.32–4: οὐρανίου γάρ / θυγατέρος Φαέθοντος ἐριφλεγέος σέο πάππου / αἷμα φέρεις (You have in you the heavenly blood of a daughter of Phaethon, your blazing grandfather); this Phaethon is, of course, the father of the young charioteer.

[261] Vian (1994) 94. This theme is not restricted to the books of the Indian War; the figure of Phaethon clearly intersects with other doomed imitative challengers, those reckless compromisers of cosmic order who figure at conspicuous points in the narrative: Aphrodite and Typhon. Note the similarity between the names of Φαέθων and Τυφῶν [in fact, Typhon has three different forms of his name in keeping with his polycephalous form (and metrical convenience): Τυφωεύς/Τυφάων/Τυφῶν]. There is a further, geographical, connection between Typhon and Phaethon: whilst Phaethon frequents the island of Thrinacia/Sicily [38.169], Typhon is himself buried under the island of Sicily [2.622–4].

[262] 38.171–2: πατρὸς ἑοῦ ζαθέοιο φέρων πόθον ἡνιοχείης, / ἄξοα τεχνήεντι συνήρμοσε δούρατα δεσμῷ (There he would long for his father, the charioteer divine; he made a wooden axle with skilful joinery)

[263] On the ancient identification of Thrinacia with Sicily see Knight (1995) 216 n. 289.

[264] Parallels with the early years of Dionysus' life are clear; cf. 9.188–90: καὶ Φρυγίης ὑπὸ πέζαν ἐς αὔλια λύγκας ἐλάσσας / στικτοῖς πορδαλίεσσιν ἑὴν ἔζευξεν ἀπήνην, / οἷά τε πατρῴων δαπέδων ἴνδαλμα γεραίρων (He drove lynxes to the stables in the Phrygian plain, and yoked speckled panthers to his cart as if to make it like the place where his father dwelt).

[265] Phaethon's father is Helius, who is also identified as Apollo [see 40.400–1]; the chariot of Helius thus forms a suggestive analogy with the Apolline chariot of poetry.

the early books of the *Dionysiaca*, at a time when Nonnus' epic project was still in its infancy.

As Phaethon grows older, he abandons his box-cart and begins to covet the real thing [38.189–90]: δεξιτερῇ δ' ἔψαυε πυριβλήτοιο χαλινοῦ, / μαίνετο δ' ἱπποσύνης μεθέπων πόθον (With his right hand he touched the fireshotten bridle, mad with longing to manage the horses). Helius does his best to dissuade his son [38.198–9]: οὐ δύνασαι γάρ / ἰθύνειν ἐμὸν ἅρμα, τό περ μόγις ἡνιοχεύω (You are unable to guide my car—I can hardly drive it myself).[266] But at last, the father gives in to Phaethon's pleas and allows him to drive the chariot for a single day. Phaethon is given detailed instructions about the course he must follow, after which Helius clothes his son in his own fiery garments and hands over the chariot [38.295–7]: καί μιν ἀνεχλαίνωσεν ἑῷ πυρόεντι χιτῶνι, / καὶ πόδα φοινίσσοντι διεσφήκωσε πεδίλῳ. / παιδὶ δὲ δίφρον ἔδωκε (He clothed him in his own fiery robe and laced his foot into the purple boot, and gave his chariot to his son). At this point, for a moment at least, father and son appear indistinguishable.[267]

This second stage of Phaethon's development again forms suggestive links with Nonnus' own poetic development. In Books 25–40 Nonnus takes over the reins of the chariot of epic steering a course along the narrative path of the *Iliad*. Helius' warning to his son to keep a tight rein, creates a link with Aristaeus' injunction about rounding the turning-post; it increases speculation about the difficult task which Nonnus has before him in controlling his narrative, of successfully rounding the Homeric turning-post.[268]

Even before Phaethon has begun his journey, however, his efforts are doomed to failure.[269] As soon as he sets off across the sky, his fatal inexperience becomes all too apparent:

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[266] Phaethon should heed the examples of the sons of Zeus who do not attempt to usurp their father's position. Hermes keeps hold of his staff and does not wear Zeus's aegis, or wield his lightning [38.207–8]. And if Phaethon cites the example of Zagreus in his defence, saying that Zeus actually gave him the thunderbolt, he should remember what happened [38.210]: Ζαγρεὺς σκηπτρὸν ἄειρε, καὶ ὡμίλησεν ὀλέθρῳ (Zagreus held the thunderbolt, and came to his death)—not even Zeus can protect those who wish to use his weapons.

[267] They not only look alike but also share the same name; see, for example, 16.250, 24.305.

[268] See especially 38.256–60.

[269] 38.303–4: τρομερῇ δ' ἐλελίζετο σιγῇ / υἱέα γινώσκων μινυώριον (He shook in trembling silence, for he understood that his son had not long to live); cf. 38.155–66.

καὶ Φαέθων ἀδίδακτος, ἔχων πυρόεσσαν ἱμάσθλην,
†φαίνετο μαστίζων λόφον ἵππιον· οἱ δὲ μανέντες,
κέντρον ὑποπτήσσοντες ἀφειδέος ἡνιοχῆος,
ἀρχαίης ἀέκοντες ὑπὲρ βαλβῖδα κελεύθου
ἀξονίην παρὰ νύσσαν ἀλήμονες ἔτρεχον ἵπποι,
δεχνύμενοι κτύπον ἄλλον ἐθήμονος ἡνιοχῆος.

(Now inexperienced Phaethon with his fiery whip could be seen flogging the horses' necks; they went wild shrinking under the goad of their merciless charioteer, and all unwilling they ran away over the limit of their ancient road beyond the mark of the zodiac, expecting a different call from their familiar driver.)

[38.323–8]

Phaethon is patently incapable of controlling his father's chariot, incapable of successfully steering around the heavenly νύσσα. He succeeds only in throwing the cosmos into confusion.[270] At this point Father Zeus intervenes and dashes Phaethon from his chariot with a lethal thunderbolt.[271] Phaethon has failed in his efforts to control the chariot of his father, he has missed the turning-post and failed to heed his father's words. This final part of the episode has disturbing implications for Nonnus and his own mimetic endeavour: will Nonnus' own attempt to imitate his father end in a similar failure?

The narrative of the Indian War is reprised in Book 39, immediately after the story of Phaethon. As was noted in Chapter 2 the story of the ναυμαχία, the sea battle between Dionysus and his main rival, the Indian chief Deriades alludes to the μαχὴ παραποτάμιος—Achilles' battle against the river Scamander in *Iliad* 21.[272] It was noted how the fight of a single hero against a river has been recast on a grander scale with a massed array of marine forces fighting it out on the sea. It has also been noted, however, that Nonnus' imitation of his Homeric model at this point is very loose. In this respect Book 39 forms a marked contrast with Book 37: the 'closest' imitation of Homer is followed after the space of one book, by what

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[270] 38.344: μὴ χάος ἄλλο γένοιτο ('let there not be a second chaos') cries Lucifer in despair.

[271] 38.410–11: Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ Φαέθοντα κατεπρήνιξε κεραυνῷ / ὑψόθεν αὐτοκύλιστον ὑπὲρ ῥόον Ἠριδανοῖο (Then Father Zeus struck down Phaethon with a thunderbolt, and sent him rolling helplessly from on high into the stream of Eridanus).

[272] This is Nonnus' second version of the μαχὴ παραποτάμιος; Achilles' fight against the river Scamander is first recalled and alluded to in Book 22, when the forces of Dionysus cross the river Hydaspes. See pp. 164–6.

might be regarded as the 'freest' imitation. The significance of this juxtaposition is increased when we recall the book which is interposed between them, namely Book 38 and the episode of Phaethon.

It is now possible to move towards a greater appreciation of Nonnus' narrative strategy. Books 37, 38 and 39 demand to be read not in isolation, but closely together, as part of an ongoing debate about the problems and processes of writing epic poetry in the shadow of a great father: a story which foregrounds the dangers and difficulties of imitation [Book 38] is itself framed by two contrasting modes of imitation, one direct [Book 37], the other oblique [Book 39]. It is the oblique imitation of Book 39 that points forward to the future of Dionysiac song: a new stage in the relationship between Nonnus and Homer, when (after the death of Deriades and the end of the Indiadic narrative in Book 40) the younger poet will not merely take over the reins of his father's chariot, but will make that chariot uniquely his own. This is the story which will be told in the final section of this chapter.

The Poet of Dionysus IV: The Road to Olympus [40–8]

1. *Beyond Epic?*

The death of Deriades and the end of the Indian War mark a crucial stage in the journeys of both *actor* and *auctor*. The major part of Zeus's mission statement in Book 13 has now been fulfilled: the Indians have been defeated and the epic narrative of the *Iliad* has been absorbed into the multiform *Dionysiaca*. Much effort has been expended on the part of the poet and his hero; even so, neither of them has done enough to bring their narratives to a close, to achieve apotheosis. The Indians may have been reluctantly converted to the Dionysiac experience, but there still remain other parts of the literal, and literary world, which are yet to be converted.

Setting out on his journey 'home' to Olympus, Dionysus introduces the gift of wine to Arabia [40.294–7] and the Lebanon [41.1–9]. After moving through Lydia and Phrygia, he then 'planted his vine on the northerly plain, and passed from the towns of Asia to the cities of Europe' [43.448–9]: Ἀρκτῴην παρὰ πέζαν ἑὴν ἐφύτευσεν ὀπώρην, / Εὐρώπης πτολίεθρα μετ' Ἀσίδος ἄστεα βαίνων. Illyria, Thebes, Athens, Naxos, and Argos are all introduced, in their turn,

to the intoxicating vine of Dionysus. The poet makes a parallel journey through the last eight books of the epic, advancing into the territory of different literary genres: the Greek novel [Book 40: Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*], the πάτρια [Books 41–3: concerning the city of Berytus],[273] Greek tragedy [Books 44–6: Euripides' *Bacchae*] and Hellenistic epyllion [Book 47: Eratosthenes' *Erigone*]. All these different genres are 'introduced' in turn to the Dionysiac aesthetic, and so absorbed into the compendium of the *Dionysiaca*.[274]

2. *The Great Escape*

Inextricably linked to Nonnus' poetic mission is his ongoing relationship with his father, Homer. As was described in Chapter 2, the death of Deriades in Book 40 not only marks the culminating moment of the Indian War, but also corresponds with the end of Nonnus' sustained engagement with the narrative of Homer's *Iliad*.[275] The last eight books of Nonnus' epic suggest a certain level of analogy with the narrative of the *Odyssey*: in both cases a hero returns 'home' from war after a lengthy period of wandering; but as we have seen, the *nature* of Nonnus' engagement with the *Odyssey* in Books 40–8 is radically different from his engagement with the *Iliad* in Books 25–40.[276] This difference is usually interpreted by critics in a way that is detrimental to Nonnus' competence as an epic poet: if only Nonnus could have engaged with the *Odyssey* in the way that he engaged with the *Iliad*, then, one feels, critics would be happier to attribute coherence and narrative drive to the final books of the *Dionysiaca*. There is, however, another way of considering the loosely allusive structure of Books 40–8, which removes from Nonnus the charge of incompetence. I would suggest that the dramatic shift between direct and sustained Homeric allusion in Books 25–40 and oblique Homeric allusion in Books 40–8, has been consciously contrived by the poet of the *Dionysiaca*. Our readerly expectation for an *Odyssey* to follow on from an *Iliad* is not wholly frustrated, but rather subverted. Nonnus

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[273] A πάτρια is a versified history about a particular city; it is a genre common in late Antiquity and was widely practised by Christodorus of Thebes.

[274] This generic list is by no means comprehensive. For example, one might also note the inclusion of the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* at 45.105–68.

[275] See esp. 95–6; 106–7.

[276] See esp. 106–7.

dramatizes a shift in his relationship with Homer, a movement into the final phase of his relationship with his poetic father.

The movement of the poet away from father Homer has already been well described by Hopkinson, on the level of individual scenes: 'it is often [Nonnus'] practice to begin with close imitation and/or quotation of the parallel Homeric scenes, but then to move gradually away from Homer as his narrative progresses. In this way he re-enacts the process of escape from his great progenitor'.[277] What has here been suggested on a small scale can, I believe, be valuably extended to the larger frame of the *Dionysiaca*. After the death of Deriades and the end of the Indian War, Nonnus demonstrates a clear movement *away* from Homer. In Books 40–8 Homeric allusion now moves from the foreground to the background: Nonnus' *Odyssey* will no longer engage with the Homeric narrative frame in the same way that his *Indiad* did.[278] The process of escape which has been practised time and again within individual episodes is thus enacted (and perfected?) by the narrative at large.

Books 1–12 marked the first stage in Nonnus' development as an epic poet, in which he experimented with different styles and narratives, until discovering his own Dionysiac poetic. In Books 13–24 Nonnus' new poetic style was first put to the test. Rising to the challenge, Nonnus proved himself capable of producing his own Dionysiac version of Homer's *Iliad* in Books 25–40. In the final books of the *Dionysiaca*, the poet makes a dramatic move away from the influence of Homer, which has attracted him for so long; the epic imitator strives at last to become his own epic original.

We turn therefore to the last books of the epic. Attention will focus on Nonnus' engagement with the two generic 'models' which are still extant: the novel of Achilles Tatius and the tragedy of Euripides;[279] it will be considered what these two episodes contribute to the poet's mission and his bid for immortality.

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[277] Hopkinson (1994c) 122; cf. (1994b) 23: 'we see a gradual movement away from both the words and the spirit of Homer that perfectly exemplifies the relationship between the two poets . . . Nonnus' tactic is first to elaborate and then to abandon altogether his Homeric prototype'.

[278] Can Nonnus move on from the Dionysiac *Iliad* of Books 25–40 to produce an Odyssean *Dionysiaca* in Books 40–8?

[279] There exists no surviving πάτρια which can be adduced as the model for Nonnus' description of Berytus; whilst the *Erigone* of Eratosthenes survives only in fragments.

a) *The Greek Novel*

Nonnus' allusive engagement with Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* has long been recognized.[280] It began briefly with the 'abduction of Europa' in Book 1,[281] was reprised in Books 10–11, but reaches a new state of prominence during Dionysus' visit to Tyre in Book 40. In the first place the arrival of Dionysus in Tyre suggests analogy with the narrative which opens the novel. *Leucippe and Clitophon* opens with a visit by the narrator to Sidon (a city in close proximity to Tyre) after a storm, his sacrifices to the goddess Astarte, and observation of a certain picture amongst the temple-offerings.[282] Whilst he is viewing the picture, Clitophon, a young man from Tyre, strikes up a conversation with him and proceeds to narrate the story of his erotic misfortunes (which will last for the duration of the novel). In Nonnus' analogous account Dionysus arrives in the city of Tyre and pays a visit to the temple of Astrochiton/Heracles.[283] It is here that the god himself proceeds to narrate the story of the city's foundation [40.429–578].[284]

The picture which precipitates the story of *Leucippe and Clitophon* is that of 'the abduction of Europa'. It was precisely this scene that was used by Nonnus as the starting point for the narrative of the *Dionysiaca* in Book 1. Now in Book 40 Nonnus 'revisits' the place which formed the start of his story through the figure of Dionysus [40.356–9]: καὶ προγόνου δόμον εἶδεν Ἀγήνορος, ἔδρακεν αὐλάς / καὶ θάλαμον Κάδμοιο, καὶ ἁρπαμένης ποτὲ νύμφης / Εὐρώπης ἀφύλακτον ἐδύσατο παρθενεῶνα, / μνῆστιν ἔχων κερόεντος ἑοῦ Διός (He saw the house of Agenor his ancestor, he saw the courtyards and the women's apartments of Cadmus; he entered the ill-guarded maiden chamber of Europa, the bride stolen long ago, and thought of his own horned Zeus).[285]

280 Rohde (1960) *passim*; Gerstinger (1943–7) 83–7; Dostálová-Jenistová (1962); Gigli (1978); Chuvin (1991) *passim*.

281 See p. 34.

282 This scenario (storm/temple/ecphrasis) is suggestive of a general correspondence with Aeneas' arrival in Carthage in *Aeneid* 1.

283 The temple of Heracles at Tyre was referred to by Antonius Diogenes in his Ἄπιστα ὑπὲρ Θούλην; see Photius, *Bibl.* 166.111a.

284 This story about the olive and the flame is clearly inspired by Ach. Tat. 2.14, where the meaning of a certain oracle is described (cf. the story about the invention of Tyrian dye at 40.304–10 with Ach. Tat. 2.11.4–8). Nonnus' own elaborated version emphasizes the theme of mimesis. The Tyrians' skill in navigation is shown to derive from their successful imitation of the nautilus and the crane [40.504–20]. Tyre is living proof of that success and provides a positive message for the mimetic endeavours of both Dionysus and Nonnus.

285 The reference to Europa not only invites reminiscence of the beginning of

Achilles' description of the city of Tyre emphasizes its curious natural duality [Ach. Tat. 2.14.4]: καὶ γίνεται τὸ θέαμα καινόν, πόλις ἐν θαλάσσῃ, καὶ νῆσος ἐν γῇ (It presents a curious spectacle of a city in the sea and an island on land).[286] The poet's description of Tyre alludes to precisely this same paradoxical quality, but takes the idea to a new bravura level of linguistic display [40.333–6]: καὶ ἔβρεμεν εἰν ἑνὶ χώρῳ / φλοῖσβος ἁλός, μύκημα βοῶν, ψιθύρισμα πετήλων, / πεῖσμα, φυτόν, πλόος, ἄλσος, ὕδωρ, νέες, ὁλκάς, ἐχέτλη, / μῆλα, δόναξ, δρεπάνη, σκαφίδες, λίνα, λαίφεα, θώρηξ (In one place was the loud noise of the sea, the lowing of cattle, the whispering of leaves, rigging and trees, navigation and forest, water, ships, and lugger, plowtail, sheep, reeds, and sickle, boats, lines, sails, and corselet).[287]

On one level, Nonnus' engagement with Achilles Tatius can be seen as part of his ongoing project to accommodate every genre within his vast Dionysiac cycle. Thanks to its prominence (and importance) in the narrative of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the city of Tyre becomes almost a metonym for the genre of the Greek novel—in both literal and literary terms, a 'novelistic' *topos*. However, the progress of Nonnus' narrative through the city of Tyre must not simply be seen as the progression of the Dionysiac poetic through yet another literary genre. It is important to remember that Dionysus has an intimate familial connection with the city of Tyre,[288] and that

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the narrative of the *Dionysiaca;* it also encourages the feeling of closure, the sense that the narratives of *actor* and *auctor* are beginning to advance towards their respective ends.

[286] This same preoccupation with duality and the blurring of usually discrete boundaries is foregrounded in the picture of 'the abduction of Europa' right at the start of the novel [Ach. Tat. 1.1.2]: ὁρῶ γραφὴν ἀνακειμένην γῆς ἅμα καὶ θαλάσσης (I saw a picture hanging up which was a landscape and a seascape in one). The idea is exploited by Nonnus in his own account of the abduction of Europa: see, e.g., 1.93–5: "ὀφθαλμοί, τί τὸ θαῦμα; πόθεν ποσὶ κύματα τέμνων / νήχεται ἀτρυγέτοιο δι' ὕδατος ἀγρονόμος βοῦς; / μὴ πλωτὴν Κρονίδης τελέει χθόνα;" (O my eyes, what's this miracle? how comes it that he cuts the waves with his legs, and swims over the barren sea, this landpasturing bull?).

[287] Cf. 40.327–9: καὶ Τύρον εἰσέτι Βάκχος ἐθάμβεε, τῇ ἔνι μούνῃ / βουκόλος ἀγχικέλευθος ὁμίλεε γείτονι ναύτῃ / συρίζων παρὰ θῖνα (Still more Bacchus admired the city of Tyre; where alone the herdsman's way was near the fisherman, and he kept company with his piping along the shore). The opening couplet of the oracle described at Ach. Tat. 2.14.1: νῆσος τις πόλις ἐστὶ φυτώνυμον αἷμα λαχοῦσα, / ἰσθμὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ πορθμὸν ἐπ' ἠπείροιο φέρουσα (There is an island city: they who dwell therein are named for trees. It makes as well an isthmus on the sea, a bay on shore)—clearly informs Nonnus' description of the city: cf. esp. 40.311–52; 40.338: νῆσον ἐν ἠπείρῳ πόθεν ἔδρακον; (How do I see an island on the mainland?).

[288] As soon as the Indian War has been formally concluded and the spoils have been divided, Dionysus turns his mind to his 'old' homeland [40.253]: . . . ἀρχαίης Διόνυσος ἑῆς ἐμνήσατο πάτρης.

far from being hostile to his arrival, the city receives him with a generous welcome.[289] Once again, the narrative of Dionysus can help us to come to terms with the narrative of the poet: just as Tyre is the ancestral home of Dionysus, so the genre of the Greek novel (as represented by Achilles Tatius) can be envisaged as an ancestral home of the Dionysiac poetic.

The relationship, then, between Dionysiac song and the Greek novel should be regarded not as antagonistic but as sympathetic. Certain aspects of Nonnus' poetic can be seen to have their roots in the genre of the Greek novel. Most prominent here is the way that discrete elements are juxtaposed and paradoxically combined in the description of Tyre—an approach which is entirely consonant with the syncretistic, boundary-breaking aesthetic employed by the poet of the *Dionysiaca*. Notions of eroticism and divagation can also be seen to have their roots in the genre of the Greek novel (though both these themes obviously look back beyond the novel to Homer's *Odyssey*).[290]

b) *Greek Tragedy*

Dionysus' first stopping point on his march into Europe is the city of Thebes: the place of his birth. As Tyre preserved the chamber of Europa, so Thebes preserves that of Semele [44.127–8]: θάλαμον

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[289] There exists a strong and sympathetic connection between Dionysus and the city of Tyre [Ach. Tat. 2.2.1]: ἦν γὰρ ἑορτὴ προτρυγαίου Διονύσου τότε· τὸν γὰρ Διόνυσον Τύριοι νομίζουσιν ἑαυτῶν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸν Κάδμου μῦθον ᾄδουσι (It happened to be the season to be the festival of Dionysus Lord of the Vintage; for the Tyrians claim him as their own proper deity). Achilles Tatius goes on to relate the story of Icarius which will figure prominently in Nonnus' narrative at 47.34–264.

[290] Nonnus' engagement with Achilles Tatius continues into the erotic territory of Book 42 and the story of Beroe; see Gigli (1978) 434–41. A detailed analysis of the influence of the Greek novel here and elsewhere in the epic, would represent an important project, but does not lie within the scope of this book. Such an analysis would find much of interest at 42.363–7: παρθένε, σὸν δι' ἔρωτα καὶ οὐρανὸν οὐκέτι ναίω· / σῶν πατέρων σπήλυγγες ἀρείονές εἰσιν Ὀλύμπου. / πατρίδα σὴν φιλέω πλέον αἰθέρος· οὐ μενεαίνω / σκῆπτρα Διὸς γενετῆρος, ὅσον Βερόης ὑμεναίους· / ἀμβροσίης σέο κάλλος ὑπέρτερον (Maiden, for your love I have renounced my home in heaven. The caves of your fathers are better than Olympus. I love your country more than the sky; I desire not the sceptre of my father Zeus as much as Beroe for my wife. Your beauty is above ambrosia). Is Nonnus here contemplating the abandonment of his epic destiny in favour of the erotic tendencies of the Greek Novel? Back at 10.298–9 *actor* and *auctor* showed a similar preference for the erotic over all other interests; see pp. 131–2. Further analysis would also need to be given to the whole of the Ampelus episode; see especially the correspondence between the death of Ampelus [11.56–350] and the death of Charicles [Ach. Tat. 1.12–14]; as noted by Gigli (1978) 433.

Σεμέλης . . . / νυμφιδίου σπινθῆρος ἔτι πνείοντα κεραυνοῦ (The chamber of Semele . . . still breathing sparks of the marriage thunders).[291] Nonnus too is in the process of revisting a birthplace—one of the literary birthplaces of his hero Dionysus: the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

Over the following three books Nonnus rewrites Euripides' *Bacchae*, encompassing Greek tragedy within his epic of Dionysus. His imitation is by any reckoning a 'close' one,[292] but as we saw with the funeral games for Opheltes in Book 37, close imitation need not imply poetic servility—no text, however closely it is imitated, can avoid being disturbed by the new context into which it is inserted.[293] One prominent and distinguishing feature of Nonnus' version of the *Bacchae* is the heightened emphasis placed on the theme of paternity and the rites of succession. According to Euripides, Pentheus is the legitimate, authorized ruler of the city of Thebes.[294] Nonnus makes a slight but pointed alteration: his Pentheus, like so many other characters in the *Dionysiaca*, is a usurper; he does not wait to be given the crown, but takes it without being asked [44.50]: . . . κοιρανίην πατρώιον ἥρπασε Πενθεύς (. . . Pentheus seized his father's sovereignty).[295]

In the *Bacchae* Pentheus rejects the worship of Dionysus, insisting that the stories about union between Semele and Zeus are untrue.[296] Nonnus' Pentheus espouses the same sentiment at greater length [46.10–51], and Dionysus reasserts his divinity in a speech which refers to the example of the Celtic tradition of drowning bastard babies in the river Rhine. The divine thunderbolts which brought Dionysus to birth prove more than any river can that he is a legitimate son and certainly not a bastard [46.54–7]: βάρβαρα θεσμὰ

[291] Verbal reminiscence between these lines and the proem to Book 1 suggest a strong sense of closure [1.1–3]: εἰπέ . . . / νυμφιδίῳ σπινθῆρι μογοστόκον ἄσθμα κεραυνοῦ, / καὶ στεροπὴν Σεμέλης θαλαμηπόλον (Tell of . . . the gasping travail which the thunderbolt brought with sparks for wedding torches, the lightning in waiting on Semele's nuptials).

[292] Nonnus' rendition is of tragedy length, as Hopkinson (1994c) 121 observes. These books have received little critical attention, with the exception of those scholar keen to restore a section missing from the end of Euripides' play.

[293] See the discussion on pp. 179–80.

[294] Eur. *Bacch.* 43–4: Κάδμος μὲν οὖν γέρας τε καὶ τυραννίδα / Πενθεῖ δίδωσι θυγατρὸς ἐκπεφυκότι . . . (So Cadmus gives his honours and his royal authority to Pentheus, his daughter's son . . .).

[295] Cf. 5.210: σκῆπτρα λαβὼν ἀθέμιστος ἄναξ ἀπενόσφισε Πενθεύς (But Pentheus a lawless prince pushed him [sc. Polydorus] aside and took the sceptre in Thebes).

[296] Cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 242–5.

φέρουσαν ἐπολβίζω χθόνα Κελτῶν, / ἧχι νέων βρεφέων καθαρὴν ὠδῖνα διδάσκων / Ῥῆνος ἀσημάντοιο θεμιστοπόλος τοκετοῖο / αἵματος ἀγνώστοιο νόθον γένος οἶδεν ἐλέγξαι (I admire the Celtic land with its barbarous law, where the Rhine tests the pure birth of a young baby: he is judge of a doubtful birth, and knows how to detect the bastard offspring of unknown blood).

The notion of the river-judge is reprised from Book 23, where it was used by a drowning Indian as an exasperated retort to his father, Hydaspes.[297] It was seen there how the notion of judgement contributed to a more general speculation about the legitimacy of Nonnus as an epic poet. I would suggest that the altered context of this description—coming now from the mouth of a confident Dionysus and not from a drowning Indian—helps to validate Nonnus' claim to be a true epic poet, whose work is born out of the thundering Homeric hexameter.[298] The rightful place for Nonnus and Dionysus alike is with their immortal fathers [46.64]: δῶμα Διωνύσοιο πέλει πατρώιος αἰθήρ (the home of Dionysus is his father's heaven). Dionysus recapitulates the idea that since he has Olympian blood it is right for him to imitate his father Zeus [46.77–8]: οὐ νέμεσις καὶ Βάκχον Ὀλύμπιον αἷμα γενέθλης / Ζηνὸς ἔχειν μίμημα Γιγαντοφόνοιο τοκῆος (No wonder that Bacchus too, having the Olympian breed of his race, should play the part of Zeus his giantslaying father). Such a statement once again resonates with significance for Nonnus and Homer. It is no bad thing for poetic sons to imitate their fathers; but located in the closing books of the epic, we are aware more than ever of the *evolving* form of Nonnus' relationship with Homer—as if Nonnus is trying to escape from the shadow of his poetic father, by moving into territory which lies outside the traditional bounds of epic.

The concluding section of Book 46 contains Nonnus' rewriting of the end of the *Bacchae*. At the end of Euripides' play Dionysus appears

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[297] Cf. 23.94–7.

[298] Cf. 46.59–60: . . . ἀλλὰ ῥεέθρων / πιστότεροι κήρυκες ἐμοὶ γεγάασι κεραυνοί (But I have heralds more trustworthy than rivers in thunderbolts). Cf. the scene in Book 47 where Perseus turns out to fight Dionysus in Argos [47.596–8]: ἡδὺς ὁ θύρσον ἔχων, χλοερὸν βέλος, εἰς ἐμὲ βαίνων· / οὐτιδανοῖς πετάλοισι κορύσσεαι, ἄρεα παίζων; / εἰ Διὸς ἔλλαχες αἷμα, τεὴν ἀνάφαινε γενέθλην (It's nice to see you there with that thyrsus, that greenleaf shaft, marching against you armed with your wretched foliage, playing at war! If you have in you the blood of Zeus, show your breeding!). Dionysus replies [47.615–17]: οὐδέ με πημαίνει στεροπὴ Διός· ἡμιτελῆ γάρ / νήπιον εἰσέτι Βάκχον ἐχυτλώσαντο κεραυνοί / ἀφλεγὲς ἄσθμα χέοντες ἀδηλήτῳ Διονύσῳ (Even the lightning of Zeus does not hurt me, for when I was half-made and still a baby the thunders bathed me, pouring breath which burnt not upon inviolate Dionysus).

openly as a god, but does not offer any comfort to the grieving family. He remains without pity for those who denied his divinity, and is regarded by Agave as 'terrible'—δεινός.[299] Nonnus has chosen to soften the implacable nature of the Euripidean hero. Unlike his tragic counterpart, the epic Dionysus feels pity for the family of Cadmus—[46.357]: Βάκχος ἄναξ ἐλέαιρε—[300] and he stops the women from lamenting further by giving them a drink of wine [46.358–60]: . . . ἑκάστῃ / λυσίπονον κεράσας μελιηδέι φάρμακον οἴνῳ / δῶκε ποτὸν ληθαῖον (he mingled a medicine with honeysweet wine and passed it to each as a drink to lull their troubles). He then softens Cadmus' grief with healing words and offers hope of better things to come for Autonoe and Agave [46.360–3].[301] Here is a clear demonstration of the way that Nonnus' poetic is able to transform material that is itself already recognisably Dionysiac.[302] It is as though Euripides' play was not properly Dionysiac until it was rewritten into Nonnus' Cycle. The poet has corrected the 'tragic' presentation of Dionysus as a terrible and ultimately uncaring divinity. Such a dénouement would ill accord with the hero of the *Dionysiaca*, whose mission, like that of his author, is to free the world from suffering and not to compound its miseries.

3. *Fathers and sons*

By the beginning of Book 48 it would seem that both Dionysus and Nonnus have done enough to earn a place in the pantheon. The Indian War has been long since concluded, and there can be few places (and genres) that have not been introduced to the gift of Dionysus. The stage seems set for both *actor* and *auctor* to bring their long journey to an end. There is, however, a final act that is left to be played. Both the poet and his subject must prove themselves to be more than skilled imitators of their great fathers; they must demonstrate, in no uncertain terms, their ability to exist on their own terms, to become, at the last, fathers in their own right.

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[299] Eur. *Bacch.* 1374: †δεινῶς.

[300] A pointed contrast here with the behaviour of Διόνυσος ἄναξ [Eur. *Bacch.* 1375].

[301] In the *Bacchae* Agave remains implacable towards Dionysus and his rites right up to the end of the play [Eur. *Bacch.* 1381–7].

[302] As Segal (1982) has well demonstrated the *Bacchae* has its own distinctive Dionysiac poetic.

a) *Mastering Epic*

The narrative of the *Dionysiaca* began in Book 1 with a cosmic battle in which the monstrous Typhon sought to wrestle control of the universe from Zeus. Book 48 opens with a similar episode of gigantomachic disturbance in which Hera stirs up a host of giants against Dionysus in a final attempt to destroy him [48.4–89].[303] In both instances the assailants are giants;[304] they are supported by their mother, Earth,[305] and use mountains in place of conventional weapons.[306] These general parallels are reinforced by an explicit connection between the two scenes [48.77–80]: Ἠμαθίης δὲ κάρηνα νέος γύμνωσε Τυφωεὺς / ὑψιφανής, προτέρῳ πανομοίιος, ὃς τότε πολλοὺς / ῥωγαλέους κενεῶνας ἐκούφισε μητρὸς ἀρούρης, / πετραίοις βελέεσσι καταιχμάζων Διονύσου (Typhoeus towering high had stript the mountains of Emathia—a younger Typhoeus in all parts like the older, who once had lifted many a rugged strip of his mother earth—and cast the rocky missiles at Dionysus).[307] This second gigantomachy thus consciously matches itself against the first, and invites immediate comparison. It provides us with an opportunity to see how Dionysus will handle the same scenario which confronted Cadmus and Zeus in Books 1–2. It also forms an important test case for Nonnus himself, a demonstration of his evolution as an epic poet, and of his capacity to employ and control the Dionysiac poetic.

Dionysus' 'imitation' of the earlier battle fought by his mortal grandfather and immortal father is nothing less than a stunning success: where the defeat of the original Typhon took the combined

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303 See Collart (1930) 59; see pp. 10–13. The allusion/ring-composition between Book 1 and Book 48 also encourages a strong sense of closure.

304 48.13: φῦλα Γιγάντων; 1.176 Γίγας.

305 Cf. 48.7: παμμήτορι Γαίῃ; 1.154: μητρὸς Ἀρούρης.

306 Cf. 48.36–8; 1.287–90.

307 Worthy of note in the battle narrative is the reference to Chiron on Mount Pelion [48.38–42]: ἀμετρήτοισι δ' ἀγοστοῖς / Πήλιον ὑψικάρηνον ἀνηκόντιζε Πελωρεύς / γυμνώσας Φιλύρης γλαφυρὸν δόμον· ἁρπαμένου δέ / ἀσκεπέος σκοπέλοιο γέρων ἐλελίζετο Χείρων, / ἀνδροφυὴς ἀτέλεστος ὁμήλικι σύμπλοκος ἵππῳ (Peloreus took up Pelion with hightowering peak as a missile in his innumerable arms, and left the cave of Philyra bare: as the rocky roof of his cave was pulled off, old Chiron quivered and shook, that figure of half a man growing into a comrade horse). We know from several sources that Chiron featured in the *Titanomachy* which stood at the head of the original Epic Cycle [*Titanomachia* F 6, 9 (*EGF* p. 18); cf. Severyns (1928) 167]. It may well be that Nonnus' allusion preserves some memory of the role of Chiron in that poem. (Rose *apud* Rouse (1940) 3.427 is wrong to suggest that Philyra is the *wife* of Chiron. As F 9 (*EGF* p. 18) makes clear, Philyra is the mother of Chiron; cf. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.1231–41).

efforts of Cadmus and Zeus, Dionysus alone (assimilating the roles of both his ancestors) defeats a whole host of giants, amongst whom Typhon is only one out of many [48.43–7]: ἡμερίδων δὲ κόρυμβον ἔχων ὀλετῆρα Γιγάντων / Βάκχος ἀερσιλόφοιο κατέτρεχεν Ἀλκυονῆος, / οὐ δόρυ θοῦρον ἔχων, οὐ φοίνιον ἄορ ἀείρων, / ἀλλὰ πολυσπερέας παλάμας ἐδάιξε Γιγάντων / αἰχμάζων ἑλίκεσσι (But Bacchus held a bunch of giantsbane vine, and ran at Alcyoneus with the mountain upraised in his hands: he wielded no furious lance, no deadly sword, but he struck with his bunch of tendrils and shore off the multitudinous hands of the Giants). Interestingly, he has achieved victory armed not only with the vine but also with an *imitation* of Zeus's thunderbolt [48.66]: ἀντίτυπον μίμημα Διοβλήτοιο κεραυνοῦ (a perfect imitation of the thunderbolt cast by Zeus). Typhon and Zagreus, two previous figures who sought to appropriate authority, failed in their attempts to gain and to keep power because they were unable to wield the *real* thunderbolt of Zeus. Dionysus appears to have found a way to avoid the fate of either character: he does not attempt to use the *real* thunderbolt of Zeus, but uses instead his own *imitation* weapon which proves to be as successful as, or even more successful than, the real thing.

The victory of Dionysus is also a victory for Nonnus and his Dionysiac poetic. At the beginning of the epic, it took the combined force of pastoral and epic to destroy Typhon, over the space of two books; in Book 48 Nonnus' new poetic, a descendant of both these genres, demonstrates its clear superiority by crushing Typhon's second revolt in less than one hundred lines. This scene also helps to illustrate Nonnus' changing relationship with his poetic father. At the very end of the episode we discover that Dionysus has advanced to a new position of independence with regard to his father [48.87–9]: καί νύ κε πάντας ἔπεφνεν ἑῷ ῥηξήνορι θύρσῳ, / ἀλλὰ παλινδίνητος ἑκὼν ἀνεχάζετο χάρμης, / δυσμενέας ζώοντας ἑῷ γενετῆρι φυλάσσων (Indeed he would have slain all with his manbreaking thyrsus, if he had not retired of his own will out of the fray and left enemies alive for his Father). For the first time, it is made explicit that the son no longer needs the help of his father. Indeed, to some extent the roles of father and son have now been reversed: whereas once Dionysus relied upon the charitable cooperation of Zeus, now Zeus is forced to rely upon the charitable cooperation of Dionysus. Nonnus, like Dionysus, no longer depends upon his father in the way that he once did. He is capable of sustaining himself as an independent epic

poet. Moving away from the close imitation of Homeric narrative that characterized Books 25–40, Nonnus advances with confidence into a section of Odyssean wanderings that owes so little to Homer. The poet has reached a level of epic mastery; he has discovered success with his own Dionysiac poetic, his own version of the epic thunderbolt [48.66]: ἀντίτυπον μίμημα Διοβλήτοιο κεραυνοῦ—an imitation, but nevertheless, an original and effective poetic weapon.

b) *Fathering Epic*

Dionysus has acquitted himself well in battle against the giants, and in this respect has proved himself a capable imitator of Zeus. Yet there remains one significant and obvious way in which Dionysus has not yet proved his capacity to imitate his father: Zeus sired a male child, Dionysus, destined one day to win a place in heaven. Despite all his efforts, Dionysus has not yet managed to replicate this act, by fathering a male child of his own. As will be detailed in this final section, Dionysus' attempt to father a male heir, to demonstrate once and for all his existence independent of his father, provides suggestive analogy with Nonnus and his own endeavour to produce an epic poem that is more than just an Homeric imitation, but an original entity with its own independent existence.

The attempts of Dionysus to imitate his father's celebrated fecundity, to become a father in his own right, have a long history, and can be traced back as far back as Book 16 where Dionysus seduced the maiden Nicaea.[308] However, in that instance, his efforts were only a partial success: he did manage to beget a child, but it was 'only' a girl.[309] It will not be until after the Indian War that Dionysus again shows such an interest in erotic distractions and the pursuit of paternity. In Books 42–3 he makes a concerted attempt to win Beroe, and although his efforts end in failure, Eros comforts him by hinting at the erotic conquests that lie ahead: Ariadne, Aura and Pallene [43.422–36]. Dionysus duly rescues Ariadne in Book 47 and consummates their union [47.470–1]: καὶ ζυγίοις θαλάμοισιν ὁμιλήσας ὑμεναίοις / Χρυσοπάτωρ πολύπαιδα γονὴν ἔσπειρεν ἀκοίτης (The Golden Father entering the chamber of wedded love sowed the seed of many

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[308] On Nicaea see pp. 141–3.

[309] 16.399–400: ἐκ δὲ γάμου Βρομίοιο θεόσσυτος ἤνθεε κούρη, / ἣν Τελετὴν ὀνόμηνεν (From the marriage of Bromius a god-sent girl grew to flower, whom she named Telete). The name of the baby girl points towards an ending; though in Book 16 the τέλος of her father lies a long way off.

children). Dionysus has now been directly named as the father of many children, but still there is still no *explicit* reference to a male child, no equivalent version of Dionysus. The hero continues his journey: as soon as he has despatched the giants at the beginning of Book 48, Dionysus pays a visit to the court of Sithon, the father of Pallene [48.90ff.], and successfully woos the athletic maiden [48.236–7]: γαμίης δήθυνεν ἐπὶ χρόνον ἐγγύθι νύμφης / τερπόμενος φιλότητι νεοζυγέων ὑμεναίων (He lingered for some time beside his wedded bride, taking his joy in the love of this new marriage). Again, this union, like all his other unions to date, fails to produce a male heir.[310]

On his return to Phrygia Dionysus encounters the virgin Aura.[311] She will be his final conquest and will provide him with the son whom thus far he has seemed unable to beget.[312] The close connection between the stories of Nicaea and Aura, the hero's first and last maidenly seduction, has long been noted.[313] What has not hitherto been observed is the way that Aura corresponds to figures such as Typhon, Phaethon and Aphrodite, the line of doomed challengers, who attempt to usurp authority and are punished for their efforts. Aura's act of challenge and usurpation is to imagine that she is better than her mistress, the goddess Artemis [48.361]: ἱλήκοι τεὸν εἶδος· ἐγὼ σέο μᾶλλον ἀρείων (I ask pardon of your beauty, but I am much better than you). Her punishment is to be deprived of her virginity by Dionysus.[314]

[310] Sithon stands in the way of natural generational succession: he desires his daughter for himself and refuses to let her marry [48.93–5]. Dionysus emphatically restores the natural line of succession by killing the father and marrying the daughter [48.183ff.].

[311] For a recent discussion of this episode see Schmiel (1993).

[312] Expectation that Dionysus will eventually produce a son in his own image was first stimulated during the episode of Protean transformations at 1.26–8: εἰ δέμας ἰσάζοιτο τύπῳ συός, υἷα Θυώνης / ἀείσω ποθέοντα συοκτόνον εὔγαμον Αὔρην, / ὀψιγόνου τριτάτοιο Κυβηλίδα μητέρα Βάκχου (If he make his figure like the shape of a boar, I will sing Thyone's son, love-sick for Aura the desirable, boarslayer, daughter of Cybele, mother of the third Bacchus late-born).

[313] See, for example, Chamberlayne (1916) 53; the connection is made explicit at 48.814–26.

[314] In the words of Nemesis [48.445–6]: ἀγρότις Αὔρη / παρθενικὴν ἤλεγξε, καὶ οὐκέτι παρθένος ἔσται (Aura the maid of the hunt has reproached your virginity, and she shall be a virgin no longer). Dionysus is something of a specialist in the field of deflowering virgins: he already has Nicaea, Ariadne and Pallene under his belt. His attempts to seduce reluctant virgins might be seen as a deliberate reaction against the ethos of the Greek novel, where heroines usually succeed in fighting off assaults on their virginity. In contrast to novelistic heroes, the hero of the *Dionysiaca* proves irresistible.

Correspondences with the figure of Typhon are especially noteworthy. A striking feature of Aura's characterization is the emphasis on her Titanic nature.[315] Although Typhon is never explicitly named as one of them, he has an intimate connection with the Titans.[316] In fact, a clear connection is drawn between Aura and Typhon when Nemesis asks Artemis [48.394]: τίς πάλιν ἐβλάστησεν ὑπὲρ δαπέδοιο Τυφωεύς; (What second Typhoeus has sprung up from the ground?).[317] The answer to this rhetorical question is, of course, Aura. Analogies may be pressed further: whereas Cadmus is commissioned by Zeus to *vanquish/punish* Typhon, Dionysus is driven mad with desire in order to *punish/vanquish* Aura. When Dionysus approaches the sleeping Aura (and before he seduces her) he 'hides her bow and arrows in a hole in the rock' [48.626]: καὶ τόξα κατέκρυφε κοιλάδι πέτρῃ. This explicitly recalls the scene where Cadmus tricks Typhon into handing over the sinews of Zeus and then (before going on to seduce him with song) hides them in the ground [1.515]: κατέκρυφε κοιλάδι πέτρῃ.[318] Parallels with the story of Cadmus and Typhon create an interesting poetic resonance. In Book 1 Cadmus, an emblem of the pastoral genre, managed to seduce the monstrous Typhon with his deceptive music. In Book 48 the role of pastoral has been filled by the Dionysiac poetic. Whereas Cadmus' victory over Typhon was only partial, the victory of Dionysus over Aura is complete. We appreciate, by analogy, the superiority of Dionysiac song over its pastoral ancestor.

The rape of Aura results at last in the birth of a male child for Dionysus. He has finally succeeded in imitating his father, in the arts of both war *and* love.[319] Like the baby Dionysus, Iacchus nar-

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[315] Cf. 43.431: . . . λέχος Τιτηνίδος Αὔρης (Aura of Titan stock); 48.441: Τιτηνίδα παῖδα (a Titan child); she is also described as the daughter of the Titan Lelantus, e.g., at 48.917.

[316] Nike expresses her anxiety that if Zeus is ousted from heaven, the Titans will take his place [2.230]: οὐκ ἐθέλω Τιτῆνας ἰδεῖν κρατέοντας Ὀλύμπου (I wish to see no Titans lords of Olympus).

[317] Nemesis lives on Mt. Taurus, which is where, we are reminded, Typhon met his end [48.375–7]: Νέμεσιν δὲ μετήιεν· εὗρε δὲ κούρην / ὑψινεφῆ παρὰ Ταῦρον, ὅπῃ παρὰ γείτονι Κύδνῳ / παῦσε Τυφαονίης ὑψαύχενα κόμπον ἀπειλῆς (She took herself off to Nemesis, and found her on the heights of Taurus in the clouds, where beside neighbour Cydnus she had ended the proudnecked boasting of Typhon's threats).

[318] A correspondence not noted by Vian (1976) *ad loc.*

[319] Compare the comments of the ghost of Ariadne, immediately before Dionysus rapes Aura [48.550–2]: καὶ σὺ μετὰ Κρονίωνα λέχος μετὰ λέκτρον ἀμείβων / ἔργα γυναιμανέος μιμήσαο σεῖο τοκῆος, / οἶστρον ἔχων ἀκόρητον ἀμοιβαίης ἀφροδίτης (You

rowly survives death: Aura murders one of her twins and Artemis is forced to intervene to prevent Iacchus from suffering a similar fate [48.917–27]. Whereas the mother of Dionysus was translated to the sky, the mother of Iacchus throws herself into a river and is transformed into a fountain [48.935–42]. Like Dionysus, Iacchus is given over to the care of a foster mother, Nicaea [48.948–51].[320] This is where the connections between the young Dionysus and the young Iacchus come to an end. There exists no gulf between Dionysus and his son, as there was between Zeus and his son [48.951–3]: λαβὼν δέ μιν ὑψόθι δίφρου / νήπιον εἰσέτι Βάκχον ἐπώνυμον υἷα τοκῆος / Ἀτθίδι μυστιπόλῳ παρακάτθετο Βάκχος Ἀθήνῃ (While the boy was yet young, Bacchus took into his car this Bacchus his father's namesake, and presented him to Attic Athena amid her mysteries). Father and son are so closely connected that they share the same name; they even ride together in the same chariot, as Botrys rode with his father Staphylus in Book 18, models of success and succession.[321] At Eleusis, the father and son, along with the earlier incarnation of Zagreus, are united in a single trinitarian aspect [48.967–8]: ἀνεκρούσαντο πολῖται / Ζαγρέα κυδαίνοντες ἅμα Βρομίῳ καὶ Ἰάκχῳ (The Athenians beat the step in honour of Zagreus and Bromius and Iacchus all together). The dissolution of the boundaries which separate Dionysus the father and Iacchus the son looks forward symbolically to the moment of unification between Dionysus and his own father Zeus—the end of both Dionysus' long journey and the *Dionysiaca* itself.

Before Dionysus' apotheosis, there is one last task for him to perform: the elevation of Ariadne to the stars. This is an act of great symbolic importance. Up until this point in the epic, the only character capable of performing catasterisms has been Zeus himself.[322]

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are just like Cronion changing from bed to bed, and you have imitated the doings of your woman-mad father, having an insatiable passion for changing your loves).

[320] The reappearance of Nicaea further emphasizes the sense of imminent closure. Nicaea represented Dionysus' premature attempt to beget a son and enter Olympus: the episode of Aura perfects the earlier imperfect attempt at fatherhood.

[321] Compare that other eponymous father and son, Phaethon. In the case of that father and son, the sameness of the name only emphasizes the difference and distance between them. The son was incapable of controlling the chariot of the father, and unable to follow the natural path of succession.

[322] Zeus's catasteristic acts began in Book 1 with the Bull [1.355–62]. In the Phaethon episode Zeus elevated the blasted charioteer to the stars [38.424–5]. After the death of Icarius, Erigone and her dog, Zeus finds a place for them within the starry heavens [47.246–7]: Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ ἐλέαιρεν· ἐν ἀστερόεντι δὲ κύκλῳ / Ἠριγόνην στήριξε Λεοντείῳ παρὰ νώτῳ (Father Zeus had pity, and he placed Erigone in the company of the stars near the Lion's back); cf. 47.248–64.

In Book 16 Dionysus flirted with the idea of raising Nicaea's dog to the stars, but like his attempt at begetting a male son on that same occasion, it came to nothing.[323] Now, for the first and only time, on the very threshold of Olympus, Dionysus places the crown of Ariadne in the stars [48.971–2]: Στέφανον περίκυκλον ἀποιχομένης Ἀριάδνης / μάρτυν ἑῆς φιλότητος ἀνεστήριξεν Ὀλύμπῳ (And he placed in Olympus the rounded crown of Ariadne passed away, a witness of his love). This act of catasterism, the assumption of the duties of Zeus, confirms and legitimates his right to take his place as a god by the side of his father.

The final stage of Dionysus' journey towards apotheosis is paralleled by Nonnus' own ultimate advance towards, and assumption into, the literary pantheon. Before Dionysus can enter his father's heaven he has to father a son for himself. This is, as we have just seen, the crowning moment in his attempt to imitate and be like his father. At the same time, it is a definitive sign of how different he is from his father, an indication at last that he exists in his own right. Before immortality can be granted to Nonnus, he too must demonstrate a similar blend of likeness to and difference from his own poetic father, by bringing to perfection the *Dionysiaca*, by becoming the father of his own song.[324] This, I would argue, is what the last eight books are all about: the poet's attempt to escape from the shadow of the one who gave him birth, to prove his own poetic independence by producing, in place of an *Odyssey*, his own distinct narrative of wandering and return. Thus he has come at last to the end of his anxious narrative of Homeric influence, the end of his quest 'to become [his] own Great Original'.[325]

The preceding account has endeavoured to trace the on-going and gradually evolving *agon* between the two poets. In the early books

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[323] 16.200–1: μετὰ Σείριον ἀστέρα Μαίρης / αἰθέρος ἔνδον ἄγω σε καὶ ἀστερόεντα τελέσσω (I will take you up into the upper air and make you a star like Seirus, the star of Maira).

[324] Cf. Bloom (1973) 37: '[The poet] must be self-begotten, he must engender himself upon the Muse his mother... The strong poet fails to beget himself—he must wait for his Son, who will define him even as he has defined his own Poetic Father'; cf. Freud quoted in Bloom (1973) 64: 'all the instincts, the loving, the grateful, the sensual, the defiant, the self-assertive and independent—all are gratified in the wish to be *the father of himself*'. On the close relationship between God the father and his son see *Met. Jo.* 10.106–7.

[325] Freud quoted in Bloom (1973) 64.

Nonnus, as novice poet, explored the ways and means of writing epic. In Book 12 Nonnus discovered his own distinctive voice, a Dionysiac aesthetic which sprang up at the same moment as the vine. Armed with this new poetic weapon Nonnus moved towards confrontation with Homer, gradually intensifying hostilities as he advanced through the Indian War, to the Iliadic core. The last eight books demonstrate both a movement away from Homer but also a movement towards him. Paradoxically, Nonnus declares his difference from his father, in order to demonstrate his similarity, in order to prove that as an epic poet he is worthy of his place next to Homer in the literary canon. Poetic escape proves to be a strategy of poetic return. From the father back to the father, the cycle has come full circle:

καὶ θεὸς ἀμπελόεις πατρώιον[326] αἰθέρα βαίνων
πατρὶ σὺν εὐώδινι μιῆς ἔψαυσε τραπέζης,
καὶ βροτέην μετὰ δαῖτα, μετὰ προτέρην χύσιν οἴνου
οὐράνιον πίε νέκταρ ἀρειοτέροισι κυπέλλοις,
σύνθρονος Ἀπόλλωνι, συνέστιος υἱέι Μαίης.

(Then the vinegod ascended into his father's heaven, and touched one table with the father who had brought him to birth; after the banquets of mortals, after the wine once poured out, he quaffed heavenly nectar from nobler goblets, on a throne beside Apollo, at the hearth beside Maia's son.)

[48.974–8]

[326] A father's heaven, but also a heaven reserved for fathers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIONYSIAC EXPERIENCE

> Both the illusion of the drama [sc. Euripides' *Bacchae*] and the intoxication of the wine bestow a fresh vision of a hitherto concealed reality, a vision that may either be enlightenment or . . . delusion . . . Dionysus' realm blurs the clear line between conscious and unconscious, sanity and madness, exalted purity and wild abandonment, strength and weakness. The vision opened by Dionysus, whether through his wine and cult or through the illusion of the drama, makes us see in simultaneous perspective things otherwise kept apart.[1]

In my discussion of the parallel lives of *actor* and *auctor*, I touched upon the implicit connection between the wine of Dionysus and the poem of Nonnus.[2] This brief concluding chapter will explore further these connections, and will suggest that the experience of reading the *Dionysiaca* is in many ways analogous to the experience of drinking wine. The reader of Nonnus' poem, no less than the drinker of wine, experiences a kind of intoxication, which profoundly alters his or her perception of 'reality'.

One of the first characters to bear witness to the extraordinary nature of the wine of Dionysus is a certain anonymous Indian who first tastes the drink, mixed into the waters of Lake Astacis [14.419]: ξεῖνον ἴδον καὶ ἄπιστον ἐγὼ ποτόν (Here is a strange and incredible drink).[3] He continues [14.427–9]: ἆ μέγα θαῦμα, / τοῦτο πιὼν ἐθέλω πιέειν πάλιν· ἀμφότερον γάρ / καὶ γλυκερὸν τόδε χεῦμα καὶ οὐ κόρον ἀνδράσι τίκτει (O here's a great miracle! When I drink this I want to drink

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[1] Segal (1982) 15. He continues (1982) 20: 'The play forces us to live not just the "unresolvable antithesis of two worlds," . . . but the melting of those worlds into one another in an experience that questions the very thought-processes that make reality intelligible and therefore manageable. Euripides brings us to the verge of what, next to death, is the most terrifying experience of human life, madness, the loss of our hold on the clarity of those relations on which we depend for that boundary between fusion and otherness that we call sanity'.

[2] See pp. 114–16.

[3] Cf. Harries (1994) 64 who sees ὄγκον ἄπιστον at 1.9 as a reference not only to Athena but also to the incredible bulk of Nonnus' poem.

more! For this has both merits—it is sweet and it does not surfeit).[4] These lines read like an enthusiastic sales pitch on behalf of Dionysiac epic—a strange and incredible poem which (if we believe the hype) readers will not be able to put down.[5] What is so special about this new product? For a start it promises to banish the cares of its consumers/readers: it will provide 'a source of comfort for the human race' [12.158]: βροτέης ἄμπαυμα γενέθλης; and will bring 'delight to all the four quarters of the world' [12.169]: τερπωλὴν . . . ὅλῳ τετράζυγι κόσμῳ.[6] Part of the attraction of this product, aside from its sweetness, is the fact that it provides an 'earthly image of divine nectar'—νέκταρος οὐρανίου χθόνιον τύπον [12.159]; this is the nearest thing that mortal consumers can get to the drink of the gods.[7] In poetic terms, the 'imprint of heaven' suggests that the *Dionysiaca* will bear resemblance to those immortal poets who reside in the literary pantheon, most especially Homer.[8]

One of the most striking symptoms of drink is its capacity to alter one's perspective of the world; not uncommonly it induces double vision. When the water of Lake Astacis is turned to wine, the Indians

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[4] Cf., e.g., 18.121–3: μεθυσφαλέες δὲ καὶ αὐτοί / ἀμφίπολοι καὶ δμῶες ἐβακχεύοντο χορείῃ, / γευσάμενοι πρώτιστον ἀήθεος ἡδέος οἴνου (Servants and serfs alike were rolling drunk and danced wildly about, after tasting for the first time the delicious wine they never had before). Gerbeau (1992) *ad loc.* notes that the taste of wine has a beneficial effect on those who accept the divinity of Dionysus, and a bad effect on those who reject it. This may be broadly true; but, as the case of Icarius makes plain, the effect of wine can never be entirely predicted.

[5] Fortunately both wine and poem are products—one the fruit of the vine, the other the fruit of the Dionysiac poetic—which appear in abundance: see, for example, 12.185–7: κεῖθι φυτῶν στίχες ἦσαν ἀπείρονες (There grew rows of plants without end)—an exuberant profusion reminiscent of the 21,000 lines of Nonnus' epic. The word used to describe 'rows' of vines—στίχες—is also a conventional word for 'lines' of poetry. See, for example, Nonnus' own *Periochi* [53]: ἕβδομον εἰκοστὸν μεθέπει στίχας . . . (the twenty-seventh book deals with the lines . . .).

[6] See, for example, 47.93–4: λυσίπονον καὶ ξεῖνον ἄγεις ποτόν· ἠερίοις γάρ / πλαζομένας ἀνέμοισιν ἐμὰς ἐκέδασσε μερίμνας (A strange drink yours, which dissolves troubles! for it has scattered my cares wandering in the winds of heaven). Cf. Segal's description of the Dionysiac poetic in Euripides' *Bacchae* at (1982) 341: '[t]he text, like Dionysus, provides a relief, a drug (*pharmakon*), from the pain of life'.

[7] In the words of the anonymous Indian [14.435–7]: ἐνθάδε παπταίνω τύπον αἰθέρος· αὐτόχυτον γάρ / κεῖνο, τό περ καλέουσι Διὸς πόμα, νέκταρ Ὀλύμπου / Νηιάδες χθονίοισιν ἀναβλύζουσι ῥεέθροις (Here I see an image of the heavens; for that nectar of Olympus which they say is the drink of Zeus, the Naiads are pouring out in natural streams on earth).

[8] For Homer's imperishable, and hence immortal, status cf. 25.253: Ἀχαιίδος ἄφθιτε κῆρυξ (deathless herald of the Achaeans). On the immortal status of Homer in Antiquity see Brink (1972).

who drink from it begin to see double [15.20–1]: ὄμμασι δερκομένοισιν ἐδιπλώθησαν ἐρίπναι, / καὶ βλεφάροις δοκέεσκον ἰδεῖν διδυμόζυγον ὕδωρ (as their eyes gazed, the cliffs were doubled, and they sought to see through their eyelids a pair of waters in one yoke).[9] This altered perspective chimes in well with Segal's investigation into the Dionysiac experience in Euripides' *Bacchae*, which forms the epigraph to this chapter. Just as Nonnian characters see the world in a different way under the influence of wine, so Nonnian readers experience an altered perception of their own reality. One important consequence of Dionysiac revelation is that connections are discovered between things that have hitherto been seen as discrete and separate entities. To quote Charles Segal again: 'The Dionysiac power of both god and poet establishes connections among the life forces of all living beings and taps the primitive sources of creative energies in dance, sexuality, the sheer joy of being alive. Like the god, the poet restores us to a vision of lost unity, a sense of the interrelation among all the parts of ourselves, and a glimpse of our kinship with all the parts of the world, from plant to star'.[10] This sense of interconnectedness forms an important part of the experience of the *Dionysiaca*; it is well illustrated by the inclusive, encyclopedic nature of the epic, both in terms of material (Chapter 2) and genres (Chapter 3). Through the single, unifying narrative of Dionysus the reader is able to access a myriad of different narratives, and to explore the connections and 'kinship' between them all.

It was Nietzsche who once described how the figure Dionysus could be seen behind 'all the famous characters of the Greek stage'; how the god remained, in a sense, the 'sole dramatic protagonist'.[11] In Nonnus' epic, the Dionysiac sphere of influence has been significantly

[9] In the following book the huntress Nicaea inadvertently drinks from the wine-filled lake and suffers the same effect [16.256–7]: καὶ κεφαλὴν ἐλέλιζε μετήλυδα δίζυγι παλμῷ, / καὶ διδύμην εξδόκησεν ἰδεῖν πολυχανδέα λίμνην . . . (She tossed her head to match her double motions; and when she turned her eyes to the wide yawning lake, she thought to see two lakes); 16.259: . . . δέρκετο θηροβότου διπλούμενα νῶτα κολώνης (She saw the ridges of the beast-feeding hill double themselves). Much later in the epic Pentheus is affected in a similar manner [46.125]: καὶ διδύμους Φαέθοντας ἐδέρκετο καὶ δύο Θήβας (He saw two suns and two cities of Thebes). At this point the double vision is itself doubled, since we recall in Nonnus' words an allusion to the Pentheus of Euripides' [*Bacch.* 918–19]: καὶ μὴν ὁρᾶν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ, / δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλισμι ἑπτάστομον (I seem to see two suns, and Thebes and the seven-gated citadel in duplicate).

[10] Segal (1982) 346.

[11] Nietzsche (1872) 97–8: 'Es ist eine unanfechtbare Überlieferung, daß die griechische Tragödie in ihrer ältesten Gestalt nur die Leiden des Dionysus zum Gegenstand

extended. The god is now not merely to be found behind the masked characters of the tragic stage; he is to be found hiding behind every narrative, every character, every genre. Dionysus, imitator *par excellence*, has become the ultimate mimetic source, an Ur text, from which springs all life—historical, mythological and literary. We are invited to see that there is no narrative, genre or character that is not in some sense already Dionysiac. Achilles and Odysseus, Alexander[12] and Christ[13] can all be seen as doublets, masked versions of Dionysus. Likewise, in a bold inversion of the literary tradition, all poetry—epic, epyllion, tragedy, pastoral, epigram, the Greek novel and Πάτρια—is seen to contain the seed of Dionysus, is born out of Dionysiac song.[14]

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hatte und daß der längere Zeit hindurch einzig vorhandene Bühnenheld eben Dionysus war. Aber mit der gleichen Sicherheit darf behauptet werden, daß niemals bis auf Euripides Dionysus aufgehört hat, der tragische Held zu sein, sondern daß alle die berühmten Figuren der griechischen Bühne, Prometheus, Ödipus usw. nur Masken jenes ursprünglichen Helden Dionysus sind. Daß hinter allen diesen Masken eine Gottheit steckt, das ist der eine wesentliche Grund für die so oft angestaunte typische "Idealität" jener berühmten Figuren.'

[12] On Dionysus as Alexander see, for example, Bornmann (1975); Chuvin (1992a) 73–4 with references; Bowersock (1994) 156–7.

[13] On analogies between Christ and Dionysus see, for example, Bowersock (1994) 162: 'In his saving mission across Greece, Asia Minor, the Near East, and India the Dionysus of Nonnus is no longer a divinised Alexander: he is a polytheist Christ'; cf. Liebeschuetz (1995) 206–7.

[14] See Bloom (1973)141, who describes a style developed by strong poets 'that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being *imitated by their ancestors*'. He goes on to describe 'the triumph of having so stationed the precursor, in one's own work, that particular passages in *his* work seem not to be presages of one's own advent, but rather to be indebted to one's own achievement . . .'. Cf. Hinds (1998) 106: '. . . Ovid is engaged in a tendentious poetic appropriation of his predecessor—a kind of bid for teleological control. Rather than construct himself as an epigonal reader of the *Aeneid*, Ovid is constructing Virgil as a hesitant precursor of the *Metamorphoses*. There is a *Metamorphoses* latent in the *Aeneid*, Ovid's treatment tells us . . . But in Virgil these myths are fragmented, scattered, unresolved: not until Ovid's own poem are they gathered into perfection and system'. Burrow's *Epic Romance* (1993) 284 describes the 'seductive view of Milton as a powerful conqueror of the past, who effectively destroyed the epic by laying claim to the earliest, primal grounds for a heroic action: by choosing to write of the earliest moments of human history, he predates his predecessors, and all possible successors, and so makes the epic vanish into its own origins. In the process he ensures the priority, and the superiority, of his Christian epic over its predecessors: his hero makes possible the pitiful deeds of generations of Hectors, Aeneases, and Rinaldos. This view of Milton as the heroic dominator of the past is, however, at odds with many of the most intimate and pervasive concerns of *Paradise Lost*: the poem dwells repeatedly on the duties and bonds which link creations to their creators . . . How can a new narrative, and a new heroic ethos, be both like, and different from, a past work, without either replicating that earlier work, or forcibly transforming it into the image of the present?'.

The experience of Nonnus' epic does not end with a syncretistic vision of the world, whereby the whole of life is filtered, and focalized through the figure of Dionysus.[15] There is another important element to the reader's Dionysiac experience, another aspect to their 'altered perspective', which is yet to be fully revealed. In Chapter 2 it was described how the specific narrative of Dionysus invited and encouraged our engagement with a wider mythological narrative; in Chapter 3 the same narrative of Dionysus was used to 'unlock' the story of the poet Nonnus and his attempts to write a successful epic poem. Both the mythological and the metapoetic narrative might in themselves be said to represent two cases of altered perception, where the reader sees something 'other' than the story of Dionysus. What I am here suggesting is that the process of allusive engagement, the very act of reading itself, should be seen as a kind of Dionysiac experience.[16] Just like wine, allusion 'bestow[s] a fresh vision of a hitherto concealed reality'; just like wine, it 'makes us see in simultaneous perspective things otherwise kept apart'.[17]

An appreciation of this Dionysiac experience of reading is essential to any wider appreciation of Nonnus' poetic strategies: the *Dionysiaca* is not merely a poem about Dionysus, but truly a Dionysiac poem. In certain key repects, moreover, the text of the *Dionysiaca* can be said to resemble a mask. Like the mask of Dionysus described by Walter Otto, it is a surface[18] that hints at hidden depths, but which has on its own 'no complete existence'.[19] The surface of the *Dionysiaca*, the narrative of Dionysus, masks a complex 'other' world of allusion: 'It is the symbol and manifestation of that which is simultaneously there and not there: that which is excruciatingly near, that which is completely absent—both in one reality'.[20]

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[15] Attempts to examine the broader cultural implications of Nonnian syncretism lie outside the formal scope of this monograph.

[16] Compare Braden (1974) 855: 'It is the surface noise of the poem that most insistently recommends itself to our attention, and one might wonder if that itself is not Nonnos' message, *his version of the Dionysiac experience*' [my emphasis].

[17] The process of allusive reading which is troped here as a Dionysiac experience, an equivalent to the intoxication of wine, is, of course, an experience common (to a greater or lesser degree) to all texts. In this respect, the *Dionysiaca* forces us to realize that the act of reading, the process of engaging with any text ('pagan' or 'Christian'), is an essentially Dionysiac experience. After Nonnus, every reader becomes a Dionysiac reader.

[18] Otto (1965) 90.

[19] Otto (1965) 91.

[20] Otto (1965) 91.

Our engagement with allusion forces us under the 'surface' of the *Dionysiaca*, in order to give substance and depth to the mask of the text, to add dimensions and colour to the shadowy characters on the page.[21] Without such engagement, Nonnus' epic remains as insubstantial, and inexplicable, as a mask. The only way, then, to read the *Dionysiaca* is to become a Dionysiac reader. One must therefore allow oneself to be initiated into the mysteries of the *Dionysiaca*. A journey that starts in the proem, when Nonnus joins the θίασος of Dionysus, will climax (appropriately enough) at the Eleusinian Mysteries [48.951–68]. At Eleusis, we are told, the consummating moment of initiation was marked by the revelation of an ear of corn.[22] Enlightenment did not lie with the corn *per se*, but with its symbolic interpretation; so with the *Dionysiaca*: readerly enlightenment can be reached only through an appreciation of the symbolic and allusive nature of the narrative of Dionysus, an appreciation that meaning lies below the surface, behind the mask of this Dionysiac text.

Dionysiac intoxication, however, does not always equate with positive, revelatory experience. As the later (modern) reception of the *Dionysiaca* suggests,[23] there are still many who are resistant to the charms of Nonnus' wine. In Book 47 Nonnus describes the reaction of a group of Attic farmers to the novel potation of wine provided by the countryman Icarius. It is a description which could apply with equal validity (and only a little adaptation) to many modern critics of the *Dionysiaca*:

> ἀγρονόμοι δ' ἀρύοντες ἐπασσυτέροισι κυπέλλοις
> πάντες ἐβακχεύθησαν ἀμερσινόῳ φρένας οἴνῳ·
> ὄμματα δ' ἐπλάζοντο, φιλακρήτοις δὲ κυπέλλοις
> ἄργυφα πορφύροντο παρήια, γειοπόνων δέ
> στήθεα θερμαίνοντο, ποτῷ δ' ἐβαρύνετο κόρση,
> καὶ φλέβες οἰδαίνοντος ἐκυμαίνοντο καρήνου·
> τοῖσι δὲ δερκομένοισιν ἐσείετο κόλπος ἀρούρης
> καὶ δρύες ὠρχήσαντο καὶ ἐσκίρτησαν ἐρίπναι·
> καὶ σφαλεραῖς λιβάδεσσιν ἀήθεος ἔμπλεος οἴνου
> ὕπτιος αὐτοκύλιστος ἐπὶ χθόνα κάππεσεν ἀνήρ.

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[21] Chamberlayne (1916) 55 is, in a sense, right to say that 'Neither Dionysus nor any other person in the poem has an individual character': it is up to the individual reader to individualize Nonnus' characters, through an active engagement with allusion.

[22] Craterus *FGrHist* 342 F 16 = *Schol. Aristoph. Av.* 1073; see Burkert (1987) 89–95.

[23] See pp. 2–3.

καὶ χορὸς ἀγρονόμων φονίῳ δεδονημένος οἴστρῳ
τλήμονος Ἰκαρίοιο κατέτρεχε θυιάδι λύσσῃ,
οἷά τε φαρμακόεντα κερασσαμένου δόλον οἴνου,
ὃς μὲν ἔχων βουπλῆγα σιδήρεον, ὃς δὲ μακέλλῃ
θωρήξας ἑὸ χεῖρας, ὁ δὲ σταχυητόμον ἅρπην
κουφίζων, ἕτερος δὲ λίθον περίμετρον ἀείρων,
ἄλλος ἀνεπτοίητο καλαύροπα χειρὶ τιταίνων,
γηραλέον πλήσσοντες.

(the countrymen quaffed cup after cup, and made wild revel over the wine which dazed their wits. Their eyes rolled, their pale cheeks grew red—for they drank their liquor neat, their peasant-breasts grew hot, their heads grew heavy with the drink, the veins were swollen upon their foreheads. The bosom of the earth shook before their eyes, the trees danced and the mountains skipt. Men fell on their backs rolling helplessly over the ground, full of the unfamiliar wine with its slippery drops. Then the company of countrymen driven by murderous infatuation charged upon poor Icarius in maniac fury, as if the wine were mixed with a deceiving drug—one holding an iron poleaxe, one with a shovel for a weapon in his hands, one holding the cornreaping sickle, another raising an immense block of stone, while another, beside himself, brandished a cudgel in his hand—all striking the old man.)
[47.106–23]

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